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CALEB KRINKLE.

A STORY OF AMERICAN LIFE.

BY

CHARLES CARLETON COFFIN.

"CARLETON."

AUTHOR OF "WINNING HIS WAY," "OUR NEW WAY ROUND THE WORLD, "MY DAYS AND NIGHTS ON THE BATTLE-FIELD," ETC.

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TO

MAJOR ALFRED LITTLE,

PLAYMATE OF MY CHILDHOOD,

AND THE STEADFAST FRIEND OF MY LATER YEARS,

THIS VOLUME IS

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

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CALEB KRINKLE,

A STORY OF AMERICAN LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

MILLBROOK.

A HUNDRED years have passed away since the Reverend Phineas Stevens preached to the people of Millbrook. It is probable that not one in a hundred of the present generation would ever have known that such a man once walked the earth if the good minister, by a wise and beneficent forethought, had not secured a mortgage, so to speak, upon the gratitude of all who might come after him.

Being a man of faith, and believing that there would be somebody alive after he was dead who would take pleasure in beholding the beautiful things in nature, and having a desire to do what he could to make life pleasant to everybody, he devoted a portion of his time to the planting of trees along the wide and level streets of the village.

Millbrook is not an incorporated town, and the little stream that has given a name to the place is not large enough to be called a river, for when measured from its source among the hills to where it joins the Merrimack the distance is not more than six or seven miles, if the windings of the stream are not taken into account.

At first it is a little rivulet trickling over rounded pebbles,

and then it gurgles with louder voice along a rocky bed in the sheep pasture, and rushes down white granite ledges, as if in haste to reach the wide meadows below; but when it has reached them it idles its time away, winding here and there and turning upon itself, as if about to retrace its course; and then, having meandered pretty much all over the verdant lowlands, runs into the woods and plays truant awhile, as reluctant to move on as a slothful school-boy. When it can linger no longer it comes boldly through a gap in the hills; it plunges headlong over the dam by the grist mill, dashes its spray upon the rocks below, and then moves leisurely across the interval, past the old elms, to the Merrimack river, and that is the last of it.

The old elms glorify the valley. People from far away come to see them. Young men and women sit beneath them by the hour sketching the surrounding scenery,—the green meadows, the winding river, the hills dotted with farms and waving with corn and wheat, and the blue mountains in the distance filling the background. When school is out the children play around the trunks of the trees, or leap up and grasp the low-bending branches, as if to shake hands with their dear old friends.

In the calm moonlight evenings the grown up boys and girls stroll arm in arm along the beaten path, or sit upon the gnarled roots, looking into each other's eyes, and whispering sweet words in each other's ears, till their hearts are all aglow, and the future seems like an elm-shaded avenue, along which they will walk hand in hand forever,—after they graduate from the academy or college.

The robins sing among the branches, and the orioles weave their hanging nests upon the bending twigs. With every gentle breeze there is a soft murmuring among the leaves, as if the benedictions of the old pastor were still floating in the air.

The old-fashioned two-storied houses, with yards in front of them, are spacious and roomy. The meadows and low-lands along the river have yielded such abundant harvests in other days that the thrifty owners, by industry and economy, are able to keep their houses neat and trim and the white paint fresh and clean, and to give a new coat to the green blinds now and then.

Lilacs, damask and cinnamon roses bloom under the windows in the front yards, and petunias and morning glories open their white and purple bells beside the gravelled walks.

High above the trees rises the spire of the meeting-house, with a gilded cock upon its topmost point. Upon the sides of the tower the golden hands of the clock point, now to the graves in the yard below and now to heaven, as if to say to the people, "The loved ones whom you have laid in the ground are not here — but there.

Every morning during the year, excepting on Sunday, punctually at seven o'clock, the gray-haired sexton rings the bell, to let the people know that it is breakfast time. He rings at noon for dinner, and when nine o'clock comes round at night, he once more sets it swinging, and then the lights that have been blinking in the valley and on the hills disappear one by one, the clerks in the stores put up the shutters, and men and boys who have been telling stories on the piazza of the hotel walk down the street to their homes, and long before midnight the last light is extinguished.

The stage that passed through Millbrook was driven by Peter Smart. He was accustomed when opposite the house of Mr. Blossom, at the lower end of the village, to chirrup to his team, and the horses always understood what he wanted, for all six pricked up their ears, straightened their traces, and leaped ahead, as if to let the people of Millbrook know that they were not at all wearied after

their ten-mile trot. When opposite the church, where the bell was giving them a welcome, Peter raised his right arm, swung his long whip-stock and longer lash twice above his head, and gave a crack that could be heard from one end of the village to the other. The horses thereupon broke into a gallop, and whirled the coach with its passengers and its mountain of baggage, as if it was a child's toy, up to the piazza of the "Flying Eagle."

The round-faced, big-bellied landlord never failed of being on the piazza to let down the steps of the coach, open the door, and bow to the ladies on the back seat and the gentlemen on the front seat.

"Dinner is ready, ladies and gentlemen," was ever his salutation.

The passengers washed the dust from their faces, brushed their clothes, and then ate a hearty dinner of roast beef, chicken, boiled ham, with vegetables, and the whitest of bread and sweet yellow butter, finishing off with plum pudding, apple pie and cheese.

There was so much good cheer at the "Flying Eagle," the houses were so neat and trim, and the old elms standing on both sides of the street, overarching it with their interlacing limbs, so glorified the town, that all who passed through it said to their friends or to themselves, that it was one of the pleasantest places in the world.

When the passengers were through with their dinner and were seated in the coach once more, Peter Smart, with a cigar in his mouth and the reins in his hands, climbed to his seat; not, however, till he said, "Steady, there!" to the two leaders, who were impatiently waiting for the word to go. As young misses dance a few steps when the music strikes up before the cotillon begins, through the overflow of sensuous enjoyment, so the leaders pranced and pir-

ouetted till they heard the word from the master of ceremonies behind them; and when he said, "Now, ladies," they settled to their work as if it was their sole enjoyment in life.

But this spurt of earnestness and excellence was of short duration, like our spasms of goodness, or like first of January resolutions. It ended at the store where Peter drove up to take on the mail-bag, which was brought out from the post office, sometimes by Mr. Meek, the post-master, a very polite gentleman, with sandy hair, side whiskers, florid complexion and very white teeth, and sometimes by a thin-faced clerk with his hair parted in the middle. When the bag was kicked into its place under the driver's seat, Peter tickled the leaders' flanks to let them know he was looking after them, and then giving a crack with his whip, which all six knew was the final signal, they leaped ahead, past the blacksmith's shop, where Mr. Fair's hammer was ringing on the anvil; past the grist-mill, where the white dust of the grinding had settled on the window-panes, giving an appearance of age to the building; past the saw-mill, where the saws were eating their way through the logs, and then galloped over the bridge, where the water was hurrying on to be swallowed up by the river.

Beyond the bridge there was a farm-house on the right-hand side of the road with a great elm in front of it, whose long lithe branches reached nearly to the ground.

The house was large, square and old fashioned, with one door fronting the road, and a side door opening upon a piazza, supported by posts, with a trellis and lattice, overspread by grape vines.

"How charming!" It was the one exclamation usually given by the passengers when they saw how neat and trim every thing was about the yard, how the chips were

raked up, how snug the wood-pile, and how green the grass. There was a charm even in the well-sweep, inasmuch as it brought to mind the song of the "Old Oaken Bucket." The garden with its onion beds, its hollyhocks, sunflowers southern-wood and sweet williams, the cherry trees in one corner, and the old pear tree, weary with age, leaning earthward and decaying, the peach trees, the bee-hives, the bird-house upon a pole in the centre of the garden, with martins hovering around it, the great barn with its surrounding sheds, the geese, turkeys, hens and roosters in the yard, the doves wheeling in airy circles, the swallows sitting in rows upon the ridge-pole and merrily twittering, the smooth fields reaching out upon the intervale to the river, the hills, the mountains in the distance, — all combined, made it ever an enchanting picture. The passengers on the seat with the driver, or smoking their cigars on the top of the coach, usually asked who lived there. So often had the question been put that the driver was always ready with the reply: —

"Captain Krinkle. He's a real nice man, and getting to be forehanded. That is his field — and that — and that —; his farm runs away over t'other side of the hill, and down to the river, — hundreds of acres of the best land there is in the country," he would say, pointing with his whip to the different portions of the estate. "He cuts that big barn full of hay and keeps blooded stock, — Jerseys and Short-horns. He's representative, selectman, moderator at town meetings, justice of the peace, settles estates, and if folks get into difficulty they always come to him to help 'em out. They swear by him. He carries on the lumber business besides. He is a real square up and down honest sort of a man. There ain't his equal anywhere round."

Then shifting his quid of tobacco to the other cheek, Mr. Smart was accustomed to say: —

"The next house is where Mr. Meek, the store-keeper, lives. He's driving a smashing business, for a young man, — he ain't more than twenty-five, I reckon. He hain't been here but a little while, but he's taking pretty much all the trade hereabouts. Come from New York way, or somewhere out there. He's as slick as ile, and if he hain't got his eye teeth cut, then I'll lose my guess." At this point the driver would tip a wink to the passengers on the seat with him, and he would do it in such a manner as conveyed the impression to his hearers that there was far more in the wink than had been expressed in words. But that they might not think he was prejudiced against Mr. Meek, he would immediately qualify his remarks by saying, —

"I wouldn't have you think there is any thing about him that isn't right, — for he's one of the nicest appearing men you ever see. There ain't a politer man anywhere round, but when ye come to trade with him, my advice to ye is to look out. He's smarter than lightning. He'll take your hide right off of ye, and he'll do it so slick you won't know it. They say he married rich in York State. Like enough that's so; but I reckon Mrs. Meek is a heap older than he is, — at any rate, she's got gray hairs, though she manages to keep 'em out of sight by using hair-dye. Well, that's the way of the world. Most all of us do something to cheat Time, or our neighbors, or ourselves. Don't we, now?"

The driver was accustomed to close his monologue by this moral reflection, which he was careful to apply not only to himself but to his listeners as well.

CHAPTER II.

WHITE HAIR'S FIRST BATTLE.

CAPTAIN KRINKLE had a fair and lovely wife, and a little white-haired boy named Caleb, who held the cat in his lap, squeezed her under his arm, trailed a string for her to catch, tumbled her heels-over-head upon the floor, and turned things topsy-turvy in a general way about the house.

When he was weary of such sport, he busied himself with the big Bible, taking it from the stand, laying it upon the floor and looking at the pictures.

"That is little Moses in the bulrushes," said his mother, as he scanned the picture of a baby asleep in a basket amid the rushes on the bank of a river.

"Moses Meek?" Caleb asked, thinking of Mrs. Meek's boy, — a little red-headed fellow, who often ran away from home to play with him in the garden. It was delightful to play there, even when Moses was not there to keep him company. And then there was the orchard, with its shady places beneath the trees, equally pleasant.

A sparrow kept flitting around a suspicious hole in the gnarled trunk of the old pear tree. Whenever Caleb came near the tree, the bird flew away, to let him know there was nothing particular in the hole,

which, however, made him think that there might be some little eggs in there that he would like to get. When he tried to climb the tree, a robin in the old elm before the house cried out, "White Hair!" "White Hair!" as if suspecting what he was about.

His father and mother sometimes called him White Hair, and so did Deborah, the girl who lived with them, as did also Jonathan Jolly, the young man who worked for them. Mr. Fair, the blacksmith, when he passed by the house to and from his work, almost always said, "How do you do, little White Hair?" and now the birds were taking it up. There was another bird with a white vest and blue coat, which his father said was a jay bird, that called to him tormentingly, "Caleb! Caleb!" He hurled a stone at the fellow, throwing it as high as he could, but it did not go half way up to the saucy chap, who kept on saying "Caleb! Caleb!" as if nothing had happened worth noticing.

He had a little white cosset lamb, and when he went out to the barn to see his pet, the turkey-cock, strutting and swelling, as if he owned the entire establishment, came at him to drive him off the premises, and the geese stretched out their long necks and hissed at him and gabbled together, but he gave the egotistical old gobbler a kick in the stomach that made him stand back, and poked the gander under his wings with a stick, that sent him and all his hissing wives to the other end of the yard. Then a plucky rooster, with green and gold on his breast, two magnificent plumes in his tail, and a crimson top-knot, jumped upon the fence, clapped his wings, and shouted as loud as he could, "Hurrah for you, my boy!"

Caleb laid out a farm on the green sward by the roadside, building stone walls between his fields and pastures.

In imagination he saw his fields waving with grain and his pastures filled with flocks and herds. He built a palatial farm-house with brick-bats.

Moses Meek, the merchant's little boy, came and set up a store close by the farm, with pieces of board for his shelves, which were piled with calico, laces and ribbons from his mother's rag-bag, and with earthen ware in the form of broken crockery.

On a pleasant summer afternoon there was a gathering of mothers in Mrs. Krinkle's parlor and another of children beneath the old elm in the door-yard, — Mrs. Meek, the merchant's wife, Mrs. Blossom, who lived in the great white house at the other end of the village, Mrs. Fair, the blacksmith's wife, and Mrs. May, whose husband was cashier of the bank. They came to take tea with Mrs. Krinkle. Mrs. Meek did not bring Moses; he came in advance, wearing a red cloth cap, red frock and red morocco shoes, and as he had a red freckled face, he was, taken altogether, a flaming little fellow. He was munching an apple, taking the last bite, but he had another in his hand.

"Where did you get it?" Caleb asked, looking wistfully at the red ripe fruit.

"Mr. Fair gave it to me, and he gave me another for you. I've eaten that, but this is mine," he said, biting into the second one.

Caleb was not quite able to comprehend it, and wished that Moses had eaten the second one first.

Mr. Fair, although a blacksmith, owned a nice orchard, and frequently had pears or apples to give to his friends, the children.

Bell Blossom, the greatest little romp in all Millbrook, came with her mother, bringing her three rag babies. She was so devoted to her children with sawdust brains that

she could not be separated from them an hour, but took them in her arms whenever she went visiting.

Linda Fair, the blacksmith's daughter, with soft brown hair and earnest eyes, gathered her apron full of pansies, marigolds, bachelor buttons, and other flowers from her mother's garden, picked buttercups, clover blossoms and dandelions by the roadside, and poured them out at the feet of her mates, telling them to take all they wanted; she would not keep any herself, for there were enough more at home.

Miranda May brought nothing but her own sweet self. Randa, they called her, — Randa, with violet eyes and winsome ways, so lovable and loving that the old gray-bearded men who met her on the street caught her up in their arms and kissed her.

Randa was an oracle of wisdom to Caleb, Bell, and Linda. Whatever she said or did, was right in their estimation. Moses, however, did not always acquiesce in her decisions.

The little mothers tended Bell's babies beneath the tree, held them in their arms, or laid them down to sleep upon the grass. Deborah, while attending to her duties in the kitchen, looked out upon them now and then. She was only a girl of larger growth, and whenever she could get a few minutes of spare time came and sat with them beneath the tree. The flowers that Linda had brought she wove into a crown.

"And now you must choose a queen," she said to the children.

"We will have Randa for queen," said Linda.

"Yes, Randa," said Bell.

"Of course it must be Randa," said Caleb.

"And I'll be king," said Moses.

"We don't have kings, only queens," said Deborah. So Moses' ambition for regal honor was quenched as soon as fired.

"Yes, you shall wear the crown, you precious child," said Deborah, placing it on Randa's brow and finishing the coronation ceremony with a hug and kiss.

"We shall wear crowns by and by with stars in them, if we are good," said Randa, repeating what she had heard her mother say.

"I never heard my mother say so, and your mother don't know any more than mine," said Moses.

Deborah told them that she would get up a picnic, and went into the house to prepare for it. The children were not quite sure what a picnic was, but they believed Deborah, and knew it would be very nice.

When Randa had worn the crown awhile she put it on Bell's head and then on Linda's, and said, "We'll all be queens."

She knew by an ethereal insight, not by reason, that though Bell had declared for her, yet that there was a longing in her heart to be a sharer of the honor, and more than that, she thought that the afternoon might be happier even to Linda, if she were to wear for a little while the chaplet for which she had furnished the flowers. So Randa gave away two thirds of her sovereignty and yet retained all her royalty. It was love that prompted her.

There were polliwogs in the brook by the roadside.

"Let's go and stone 'em," said Moses.

"I don't want to," Caleb replied.

"I'll give them Hail Columbia," said Moses, not having any definite idea as to what that might mean, but he had heard his father say it, and it meant something, — just the thing to let fly at the polliwogs. He filled his apron with munitions of war and started to give them battle.

"O Randa," said Linda, in alarm, "he's going to do it! He mustn't, must he?"

"No, we shan't like him if he does," said the queen.

"I don't care if you don't," was the reply.

"While he is doing it we'll have our picnic," said Randa. It was a child's wisdom, but it brought the would-be-warrior king to terms, and in that respect was just as efficient as the wisdom of Solomon, that settled the difficulty between the mothers in Israel. Moses did not care to forego the pleasures of the picnic, and so the polliwogs remained undisturbed.

Deborah brought out gingerbread, cakes, strawberry jam, and cranberry tarts, and they had a royal time.

When the picnic was over — when they could eat no more — Moses opened his store and was ready to sell his companions any thing they might want.

The little mothers purchased calico and bits of ribbon, paying cash down, or asking the merchant to charge it, — as other mothers, older in years, have sometimes done, with the satisfying reflection that they are in possession of the goods and that somebody or other will settle the bill. The farmer looked after his flocks and herds, and gave Randa a pasture full of cattle, that she might call them her own. It was a pre-millenial state, but it could not last forever. Bell helped herself to a dress from Moses' shelves, for one of her babies, without paying for it or asking to have it charged, and was departing, when the merchant, assuming the part of a policeman, arrested her, and rudely snatched the goods away, whereupon the farmer, doing as many an old knight was wont to do in chivalric days, flew to the young lady's rescue, and said, "You let her alone." The merchant obeyed, but lifting his dumpy legs and stumpy feet, encased in red stockings

and red morocco slippers, trampled upon the farmer's flocks and herds. One kick from little White Hair, and Moses' store, with all its goods, was in the air, and then they grappled. There was pushing, and then pulling at each other's hair.

"Oh, don't," said Linda, laying a soft hand upon Caleb's shoulder. "Stop!" said Randa to Moses. But the war had begun. History was repeating itself. So nations have grappled and arbiters have failed. The time had gone by for diplomacy. The tears came into Randa's eyes, while Linda stood pale and trembling, but Bell was not frightened. She wished that they wouldn't pull each other's hair, but wondered which could stand it the longest.

The din of the conflict reached the ears of the mothers in the parlor.

"Come here, you little brat!" It was Moses' mother calling him, but having a battle in hand, he paid no attention to the summons, and his mother came to him.

"Don't you know better than to fight? I'll give you a good spanking," and she applied her hand vigorously to that part of the body which most children discover quite early in life was made to be spanked. The application was powerful enough to produce screeches and yells from the inflammable little fellow, on fire without and within, who rubbed his eyes with his fists, and down whose hot cheeks the tears rolled in great drops to the ground.

"I'll kill you," said Moses, striking out blindly with his fists and hitting his mother on the nose.

"Shut yer yop this minute," said the mother, shaking him, till, from holding his breath, he was black and blue in the face. She was frightened and blew in his mouth and cried, "Stop, darling! Oh, don't, dear—there—there—there, don't, dear — dear — there — there — there, mother didn't

mean to." The child, gasping and catching his breath, found voice again and screamed louder than ever, till the hens in the barn-yard stopped their crooning and the doves on their perch looked here and there, arching their necks to see what was going on, — for such a screaming never before had been heard about the premises.

When the mother saw that her boy was in no danger of immediate strangulation, she changed her tactics once more, and cried "Stop this moment, or I'll call the Boogers." This not having the desired effect, the threat was put in execution by her crying "Booger — Booger — Booger, come and catch him! Old man that eats little boys, come and get him!"

Moses, thinking that old Blue Beard, who ate little boys for his breakfast, would soon be after him, kicked and struggled till he freed himself from the maternal arms, and made his way up the street as fast as his little legs could carry him, followed by his mother.

"Come here, my child." It was a calm, sweet voice that Caleb heard speaking to him from the open door. With a flushed face, with dirt in his eyes, he walked slowly up the path. It was a firm but gentle hand that rested on his brow, that smoothed his tangled hair and bathed his burning cheeks with cooling water, and that led him up stairs to his chamber.

While she was doing it Caleb was thinking of the battle. Oh, if she hadn't come just as she did, — if she had only waited a minute or two longer, he would have given it to Moses. If he could have taken out another handful of hair, if he could have given his nose one more punch, he would have won the victory, and been Moses' master forever. Gentle and kind were the words of the mother.

"I am very sorry, my child, that you should strike your playmate."

"He didn't play fair," said Caleb, with the spirit of battle still flashing in his eyes.

"But do you think it was the way to make him play fair to pull his hair and strike him in the face?"

"Well, he pushed Bell, and I wa'n't going to stand it."

"Because Moses did not treat Bell fairly you ought not to have struck him. Do you think that was the best way?"

"But he tore my farm to pieces."

"Didn't you kick over his store? I am sorry that you did so. Don't you think that you did wrong?"

The fire was still smouldering within. He was a little sorry, but wished all the while that he could have given Moses' hair one more pull.

The sun was setting and it was time for him to go to bed. He kneeled reluctantly by his mother's side to say his prayer, closed his eyes, but opened them again and said, "I guess I won't say 'Now I lay me,' to-night: I'll say 'Old Mother Hubbard.'"

"Do you think that you would feel any better to say that instead of asking the good Lord to watch over you while you are asleep? You may say it if you think it best."

Caleb could not look up into the loving eyes. He waited for his mother to say something else, but she remained silent.

"Moses hadn't any right to push her," he said.

"Shall I tell you a story?" the mother asked.

"I don't want to hear any," said Caleb, hanging his head and picking his finger-nails, but was sorry the next moment that he had declined the offer, for he liked stories. He added in a faint voice, "you may if you want to." He had heard it many times, but it was ever new as his mother told it, — that story of the Blessed One born in a stable, and while

he listened to it, his anger cooled, and he wished that he had not fought with Moses. With many a sob, he kneeled by his mother's side and lisped his prayer, and then crept into bed.

The sounds of the day were growing fainter, but he could still hear the robin calling to him, — reproachfully now, — "White Hair ! White Hair !" The geese were having a gabble about him in the yard. He could hear the gander saying "He is a bad boy," and all his wives were repeating it. He thought of his friend the cock, who had shouted, "Hurrah for you, my boy !" so lustily, but he was silent now ; he had crept away to his perch and was hiding his head beneath his wing, as if ashamed of him, for fighting with Moses. He could hear the old clock in the kitchen ticking slowly and steadily, taking up what the geese had said, "Bad-boy — bad-boy — bad-boy."

Sweet and low is his mother's voice singing a good-night hymn ; angelic music fills the room.

Are there angels hovering near? Can he not hear the rustling of their wings amid the elms? How melodious their voices mingling with the murmuring of the water by the mill ! One bright seraph bends above him, lays her heavenly hand upon his brow, presses her lips to his, and while she lingers with loving look, the vision fades away.

CHAPTER III.

SUNDAY IN MILLBROOK.

LITTLE White Hair was glad that Sunday came only once a week, for when the day came round there was a painful stillness, not only about the house, but everywhere else. He had no difficulty in keeping track of the day, for he always had baked beans and brown bread for breakfast. Nor was he in doubt about Monday, for long before sunrise Deborah was scrubbing away at the washtub. He could not make out any particular connection between Sunday and baked beans, but in that his father often said to him, when his face and hands were dirty and needed washing, that cleanliness was next to godliness, he came to the conclusion that that was the reason why Monday was next to Sunday.

He could not quite understand why Deborah and everybody else laid abed an hour or two later on Sunday than on other days of the week.

"It is a day of rest," said his mother.

"I don't want to rest; I ain't tired," said Caleb, capering round the room, climbing upon the sofa, moving his arms as if they were wings, and giving a lusty crow in answer to the rooster, who, an hour before sunrise, was calling out to him, "Hurrah for you, my boy!"

"You mustn't play rooster on Sunday," said Deborah. He liked her, for she was kind-hearted, and had a round,

plump, honest face. She was only sixteen years old, but she was strong and hearty, and ready to romp with him now and then.

"Why can't I play rooster, I should like to know?" he asked, not having fully comprehended the question of moral obligation.

"Because it's Sunday," said Deborah. He was not much enlightened by this answer. He went out and stood upon the piazza, to see what was going on, but things were nearly as quiet out of doors as within. There were no teams rolling along the street; the blacksmith's hammer was not ringing on the anvil; Mr. Meek's store was closed, and he could not buy candy. The water that on other days passed out from the mill race white with foam, when the miller was grinding a grist, made only a faint murmuring as it fell over the dam upon the rocks. A bird that sat on the ridge pole of the shed kept crying "pe-we — pe-we," as if it had lost a friend, and was saying, pity-me — pity-me. It was a lonesome cry, and so was that of a lamb that had lost its mother, and was bleating in the pasture, running here and there, not knowing which way to go.

"What makes the lammie cry so?" Caleb asked of Jonathan Jolly, the young man who worked for his father.

"They are his lamentations, because he can't find his mamma," said Jonathan, with a smile.

Caleb thought it rather a funny answer, but Jonathan was a queer fellow.

"Come, Caleb, and have your face washed for meeting," said Deborah. He went reluctantly, for though he wished to go to meeting, he did not like to have his nose rubbed up the wrong way, nor did he fancy having his eyes and ears filled with soap-suds, as they sometimes were, when Deborah was in a hurry. She was smart about the house, and had all

the breakfast things washed and the kitchen swept long before the ringing of the first bell. It was a relief to hear the bell breaking the stillness of the morning. "Come — come — come," it said, and the farmers out upon the hills hearing it, brushed their boots, put on their best clothes, harnessed their horses, and came in light buggies, covered carriages, and wagons, bringing their wives and children. The young men came early and stood around the door while the bell was tolling, to feast their eyes upon the sweet faces of the young ladies as they stepped from the wagons. So fair their cheeks, so pretty their ankles, it is not strange that the thoughts of the young gentlemen were turned quite as often during the week to the blushing faces and pretty feet of the girls, as to the heads of Rev. Mr. Canticle's discourse.

Sweet the tones of the tolling bell to White Hair as he walked with his father and mother along the street beneath the overspreading elms. So high the spire of the meeting-house that he thought of the bell as being almost up to the sky. It was delightful to stand in the porch and see the sexton tugging at the rope, to hear the pealing notes, and to think of them as floating over the green fields and echoing upon the hills. But the organ! There was nothing like it. How inspiring! Now it was only a flute, now a clarionet, as if played by some one far away. Now it was a whole band of music near at hand. It seemed at times as if he could hear the water murmuring by the mill, the sighing of the pines in the woods, the wailing of the night winds in the elms, and the rolling of distant thunder. Mr. Clef, who played it, did all this. Though Caleb could only see the back of his head, he gazed upon him with admiration and awe.

There were twenty or more ladies and gentlemen in the

singers' seats. Miss Gilliflower sang the solos. She had a pleasant face, bright eyes, and cherry lips, and wore a blue bonnet with a white plume, that nodded with every movement of her head. She sang so sweetly, skipped so lightly from note to note, now soaring aloft like a lark rising toward heaven, now floating along as if on quivering wings through the upper sky, and now came so softly and gently earthward, that Caleb admired her almost if not quite as much as he did Mr. Clef.

Reverend Mr. Canticle was an old man with white, silvery hair, deep-set eyes, heavy brows, and a weak voice, that was growing fainter year by year, as if he was getting farther away from the things around him.

It was rather tiresome to Caleb to sit up straight, with his hands folded, and he concluded to look around and see if Linda and Bell were there.

"You must sit still and look at the minister, and listen to what he is saying," said his father.

He looked hard at Mr. Canticle, without winking, but there were so many long words in the sermon, the man had so much to say on firstly and a lot more on secondly, thirdly and fourthly, that he gave it up as a sorry job. He wished that Mr. Canticle would hold up, and give Miss Gilliflower and the choir another chance. He was tired of sitting still, and concluded to rest himself by standing on the cricket to see what Moses was up to, but the cricket suddenly went over upon its side and he came down with a bump to the floor, making a great racket. Mr. Canticle stopped his talking and looked down to see what had happened, for he had just said that the feet of the wicked stand on slippery places. The noise woke up Mr. Skiver, the currier, who worked hard all the week among his tan pits, and who found it no easy matter to keep awake on Sunday, but was usually asleep before

Mr. Canticle had reached secondly. Mr. Skiver thought that Mr. Canticle had said Amen, and jumped up, put on his hat, and started for the door, but sat down again, very red in the face. Caleb's tumble and Mr. Skiver's confusion made some of the people smile. Moses laughed aloud and Caleb saw Mrs. Meek, who had a great flaming red rose in her bonnet, stuff her handkerchief into her mouth to keep from laughing. He curled down beside his mother and picked his finger-nails awhile, till, weary with doing nothing, concluded to build a house with the hymn books, and said over to himself, —

"This is the house that Jack built. This is the malt that lay in the house that Jack built."

He was going on finely and had got up to the "priest all shaven and shorn," when his father took down the edifice and pinched his ear to manifest his displeasure at his conduct.

"Keep still, Caleb; he will be through pretty soon," whispered his father.

"You said so ever so long ago, and he ain't any nearer now than he was then," said Caleb, heartily tired with Mr. Canticle.

It was a great relief when Mr. Canticle said Amen. And it was an agreeable change for Caleb to go into the Sunday-school with a flock of boys and girls.

Miss Hyssop was teacher of the class to which he belonged. She was tall and thin, and there were wrinkles in her face. She had sharp eyes and long bony fingers. Caleb had learned a verse commencing, —

"While shepherds watched their flocks by night."

But he made a mess of it when he attempted to recite it, getting it mixed up with

"This is the maiden all forlorn, that milked the cow with

crumpled horn," and all the rest of the delightful ditty that had been running through his head.

Moses did not go into the Sunday-school, but went skipping and hopping down the street, throwing stones at the birds; Linda and Bell and Randa were there, however, and said their verses so nicely that Miss Hyssop gave each a little card, with a picture of Daniel in the lion's den, wearing a red dressing-gown, a blue sash, and yellow slippers. She looked hard at Caleb when he started off with

"This is the maiden all forlorn." She had no card for him, but said, —

"Little boys that can't stop thinking about the house that Jack built on Sunday, mustn't expect to have any pictures given them."

"Did he build it on Sunday?" Caleb asked, interested to know, for his father had stopped him from building his house and he would like to know why he couldn't do as Jack did.

"He wasn't so wicked as that; you mustn't talk about Jack to-day," said Miss Hyssop, looking harder than ever at him, — so hard that it seemed as if every wrinkle in her face, as well as her lips, had said it. It was a look that chilled him. He wished that he was in the next pew, where Miss Gilliflower was telling a flock of little ones, who had their heads together, listening with all their ears, about a boy, who had a cloak of ever so many colors, who was sold to be a slave in Egypt, and all the rest of the wonderful story. Miss Hyssop had no story to tell, nor would she allow the lambs of her flock to get their heads together, but made them all sit up straight, as if they had stiff backs. She was a great deal older than Miss Gilliflower, and was so thin and wrinkled, and seemed to be so dried up and withered, that Caleb associated her with the last year's mullein stalks in his father's pasture, that had flowered and gone to seed and had been

drying in the wind for a twelve-month. Caleb speculated whether or not "the maiden all forlorn, who married the man all tattered and torn," was like Miss Hyssop.

After school was over the grown-up people went out and stood beneath the elms and ate gingerbread and doughnuts, and talked about the weather, the crops, and what was going on in the world.

Caleb, Linda, Miranda, and Bell went into the graveyard behind the meeting-house, sat down on the green grass and ate the seed cakes and cookies they had brought. Caleb did not like to be in such a solemn place with so many dead folks under the ground. Randa said they were not there, but up in the sky, and she thought it a delightful place, the grass was so green and the flowers so beautiful. Some of the stones around them were old and mossy, and the artists of former days had attempted to symbolize Time and Death by ghastly figures of skulls and skeletons, and Immortality by little cherubs with chubby cheeks.

"What ugly looking folks they must have been!" said Bell, who thought the skeletons were the likenesses of the old settlers.

"Those others are the pictures of the dear little babies that are living up in the sky, and if we are good we shall go there when we die," said Randa, pointing to the cherubs.

One grassy mound was enclosed by a picket fence, and within the enclosure there was a rose bush in bloom.

"Oh, how I wish I could get them!" said Bell, reaching her hand through the fence.

"I can get them," said Caleb, feeling stout and strong, and ready to do something chivalrous for his three friends; but the pickets hurt his fingers, and it was not till his companions gave his legs a lift that he was able to get inside of the enclosure. He plucked the roses and passed them through

the fence, getting a thorn in his finger, but bravely resolved not to mind it.

While the old men were talking beneath the elms, and while Caleb was giving pleasure to his three friends, Miss Hyssop and her friend, Mrs. Gabberly, were talking of the sermon in another part of the yard.

"It was an excellent discourse," said Miss Hyssop.

"Yes, it was. I don't know when I've heard Father Canticle preach a better one. Yet although it was so powerful, I couldn't help laughing when Mrs. Krinkle's young 'n made such a racket, just after that solemn remark that Mr. Canticle made. Did you ever see a child act so? Why, he carries on like all possessed," said Mrs. Gabberly.

"I wonder what sort of training he gets at home. Would you believe it? he actually undertook to say, 'This is the house that Jack built,' in the Sunday-school. I should think that Mrs. Krinkle would be ashamed of herself. It makes me very sad to think how some folks bring up their children. Parental government seems to me to be dying out. I don't know what we shall come to," said Miss Hyssop.

"Nor I neither. But, by the way, did you see Mrs. Meek's new bonnet? It is made of nice stuff enough, but it is a pity to have such a rich piece of silk and such costly ribbons podged up in that way. I believe I never in all my born days saw a woman that had so little taste as she has. She is a real dowdy. I should like to know how she ever came to marry Mr. Meek, when he is fifteen years, at least, younger than she is," said Mrs. Gabberly.

The bell was calling them to the afternoon service, and they strolled toward the church. Caleb and his companions meanwhile were in trouble. Caleb had filled their hands with roses, but now came the question — how was he to get out of the enclosure? The philosophy of his friends had

looked no farther than how to get him in. He tried to get over the fence, but in vain. Gradually the conviction came to him that he was in jail.

He was a prisoner and there was a thorn in his finger besides; together the burdens were too heavy to be borne. He sat down upon the grass and began to cry, while Linda and Bell and Miranda sucked their thumbs, not knowing what else to do.

"O you naughty children," said Miss Hyssop, "to be out here in the grave-yard playing on Sunday, with so many dead folks around you in the dark and silent grave, — spending your time in picking flowers! You ought to be learning the verses on the grave-stones. Here is one from the primer,

> "'Xerxes the great did die,
> And so must you and I.'

"How very solemn to think that perhaps before another Sunday you may be brought here, just as all these dead folks have been."

Her words were so frightful, her voice so sepulchral, that they felt the cold shivers run over them.

"If you were my boy, I would let you be in jail awhile, to punish you for playing on Sunday," she said to Caleb.

Notwithstanding her doleful words, Miss Hyssop had no intention of leaving him there. She lifted him out, but improved the opportunity to make him remember his naughty ways by griping him with her bony fingers so that he felt it like a manacle upon his arm during the remainder of the day.

Once more at liberty, he scampered away, followed by Bell, Linda and Miranda.

It was a pleasure to Caleb, however, during the afternoon, to see the roses in their hands, though Bell in a

very short time picked hers to pieces and ate the leaves. Randa gave hers to some girls in the next pew, but Linda carried hers home and put them in a tumbler of water, and placed them on the supper-table.

The afternoon was as tedious to Caleb as the forenoon had been. He watched the flies buzzing about and tried to catch them, but they were altogether too quick for him.

Good old grandmother Gregory, who was everybody's grandmother, sat in the next pew; her face was very much wrinkled, but Caleb liked her, for all that, for she gave him a peppermint drop, and nodded to him, as if to say, "How do you do, little White Hair?" Her eyes were getting dim, and she could not see the lines in the hymn book without putting on her old-fashioned round-bowed spectacles, but when the singing was over she took them off and put them on a little shelf at the end of the pew. As Caleb had nothing else to do, he put on the spectacles and looked at the congregation, setting all the boys and girls to giggling, and bringing smiles to the faces of some of the grown up people. Grandmother Gregory took them away from him with a gentle hand and a smile in every wrinkle on her face, and whispered, "You are a little rogue;" but Miss Hyssop looked sternly at him. His mother, instead of correcting him, said in a low whisper, "Caleb, I am ashamed of you." He thought, however, that there was a smile lurking in the corners of her eyes, though she tried to be very sober.

He laid his head in her lap and counted the posts that supported the gallery, gazed at the golden star in the centre of the ceiling, and watched a big spider that was spinning his web in a corner. He looked till his eyes ached and then dropped off to sleep.

What a long afternoon it was! When Caleb awoke, Mr. Canticle was talking on thirteenthly. Then came "remarks," "practical observations," "inferences," then "conclusion." When he had finished all these, Caleb expected Amen, but Mr. Canticle said, "I will but add," which lasted several minutes, and then "one word more," which amounted to about a thousand, according to Caleb's calculation; then "lastly," which wasn't lastly by a great deal; for after awhile he said, "I will weary your patience no longer," but went on so long that Caleb came to the conclusion that Mr. Canticle was a good deal like the wind-mill that Jonathan Jolly had whittled out for him, and which kept on the go as long as the wind lasted. But the wind died away at last, and when Mr. Canticle said, "Let us pray," those who had been sleeping opened their eyes, and all hands stood up and yawned and stretched their legs, with a sense of relief.

When meeting was over, the farmers' boys clapped on their hats, rushed out of doors, unhitched their horses, helped their mothers and sisters into the wagons, and had lively trots down the broad street, trying the speed and bottom of their horses.

Caleb went home as hungry as a bear, ready to devour all there was on the table. He thought that Deborah was a long time in getting supper, but when it was ready he made up for lost time, and ate a plateful of beans, a big potato with butter on it, a slice of cold ham, and a piece of pie.

When supper was over, he looked round to find something to do. He could not build cob-houses in the granary, or shovel dirt into his little wheelbarrow, as on other days. What should he do? The sweet tones of the organ were still sounding in his ears. He would make believe

that he was Miss Gilliflower and that he was up in the singers' seats. He placed a chair by the window, climbed into it, held a singing-book in his hand, gave out the hymn as Mr. Canticle had given it, with a drawling voice, then sang as loud as he could, with the hens, geese and turkeys for a congregation. When he had sung himself out, he sat on the piazza and watched the cloud of midges in the air, till his father told him he must go in and learn the catechism. What the catechism was he had not the remotest conception, but he started off with spirit and tried to say it after his father. What man's chief end was he had no idea, and non-conformity and inability were such long words and meant nothing, so far as he could see, that he soon became discouraged.

"Ain't there a kittenchism? I guess I could learn that," he said.

He concluded that he had made a blunder, for Deborah and Jonathan and his father and mother laughed.

Much better than the catechism was the story his mother told of the little boy who killed a big giant with a sling and stone. He said over once more the verse he had tried to say in the Sunday school, and accomplished it without getting it mixed up with the house that Jack built. Then his mother told him the story in prose. "It was the birth-night of the Good Shepherd, and I want you to be one of his lambs," said his mother.

"And have a little tail?" Caleb asked, not quite understanding the matter. Deborah laughed heartily, as did his father, and he noticed that his mother smiled.

It being Sunday evening, White Hair had on his go-to-meeting clothes; though that did not deter him from going into the barn-yard to see Deborah milk the cows.

"You'd better keep away, White Hair; the cows may hook you."

"I ain't afraid of them," White Hair replied, picking up a stick and flourishing it.

"Don't you frighten 'em, neither," said Deborah.

There was one honest old cow with wrinkles on her horns that stood still and allowed White Hair to pat her sides. He might even pull her tail and she would not mind it, but the skittish young heifer which Deborah was milking kept a sharp eye on him, and finally jumped quickly away, kicking her off the stool, overturning the pail and spilling the milk.

"There! now, see what you have done," she said, getting up and shaking the milk from her bedrabbled dress. "You careless boy. I've a good mind to box your ears. Go into the house and tell your mother to give you a spanking."

"I shan't do it," White Hair replied, not caring to invite punishment of that sort.

"You're always into some mischief. You're a gump," said Deborah.

"No, I ain't a gump," Caleb replied, indignantly repelling the accusation. But a great bull-frog in a mud puddle by the roadside suddenly took up what Deborah had said, and croaked in a deep, grum voice, "*You're a gump! you're a gump! you're a gump!*" A score of frogs concealed in the rushes struck in at once and repeated it, which made White Hair very angry. He had heard them croak many times, but never before had they taunted him with being a gump.

Caleb left the yard and went out to the mud-puddle with his stick, to give the blackguards a thrashing. He discovered one big fellow with great goggle eyes sticking out of his head, and with long shiny legs, sitting on a log, who winked at him and puffed out his flabby throat as if ready to split with laughter, and said, "*You're a gump! you're a gump! you're a gump!*"

The fellow was the leader of the whole crew, for no sooner had he said it than all the others, great and small, repeated it.

"I'll give it to ye," said Caleb, stepping upon the slimy log which lay half embedded in the mud. "I'll give it to ye," he repeated, as he edged his way toward the frog, raising his stick.

"There, take that!"

He brought the stick down with a whack, but the saucy chap, tipping him a wink, gave a quick leap, and went down into the water *kerchug!*

While White Hair was looking to see where the fellow had gone, his feet suddenly slipped and he went down upon his back with a splash into the soft mud. In trying to get up, he tumbled over the other way upon his face. There was mud in his ears, his mouth, his nose, his eyes. He struck out blindly with his arms, kicked and struggled and floundered, and finally reached solid ground. He was covered with mud from head to foot. It was trickling down his back; he could feel it on his legs and in his shoes. It was in his hair, on his hands, and all over his go-to-meeting clothes.

He made his way slowly up the road. It was tormenting to hear all the saucy crew laughing behind him, "*You're a gump! you're a gump! you're a gump!*"

Jonathan Jolly was standing beneath the old elm in front of the house when he came up and told his griefs, with blubbering lips.

"Ha! ha! ha! you are a gump, sure enough," said Jonathan, who joined in with the frogs and laughed at him. But his mother and Deborah soon had him in the wash-tub and gave him a thorough scrubbing. Deborah improved the opportunity to pay him off for frightening the

heifer, by rubbing up his nose the wrong way. He had been naughty through the day, and went to bed in disgrace. While lying there he could hear the rascals in the puddle having a hearty laugh over his misfortune, croaking louder than ever, " *You're a gump! you're a gump! you're a gump!*"

CHAPTER IV.

DAN DISHAWAY.

ON Monday morning Caleb was at play in the door-yard, none the worse for the mishap of Sunday, Deborah was at the wash-tub in the kitchen, Jonathan was hoeing corn in the field near the barn, and Captain Krinkle was standing beneath the old elm in his shirt-sleeves, watching Caleb and thinking over his business. There came the blast of a trumpet swelling up the valley, and then appeared an old horse, blind of one eye, with spavins and ring-bones on his legs, and so thin in flesh that one would have no difficulty in counting the animal's ribs. It was a bay horse, that had seen many years of hard usage, indicated by the dropping of the under lip and the condition of its teeth. The horse was attached to a tin peddlers' cart, — a creaking vehicle painted red, with wooden tubs, pails, mop-handles and corn brooms on the top, a pile of pelts and bags filled with rags on the rack behind, and old brass kettles attached to the axles and dangling beneath.

Upon the seat, blowing the trumpet, was a tall, lantern, jawed, blue-eyed young man, with a long nose, big ears, wide mouth and good-natured countenance, — Dan Dishaway.

"Toot — toot — toot!" resounded up and down the val-

ley. The horse turned of his own accord from the road into the door-yard, and the young man began a song to the air of the "Fine Old Irish Gentleman."

Thus it ran, —

"Dan Dishaway is coming and they say he's one of the wags,
And the critter that he drives is the very best of nags;
So all ye wives and daughters, just bring out all your rags,
And turn things topsy-turvy, while hunting up your old brass kettles, pulled wool, pelts and tags,
For I'm the chap to trade with you and put them in my bags.

"I'll tell you at the outset — the folks all call me Dan;
And if you want a porringer, or coffee-pot, or pan,
Or skimmer, dipper, ladle, or a beautiful oil can, —
To say nothing of needles, thread, tape, knives, forks, spoons, dolls, tin whistles, or a very pretty fan,
Why, I'm the chap to trade with you, just like a gentleman."

"Hullo, little White Hair! How do you do?" shouted Dan, as he finished his song in Captain Krinkle's door-yard. He threw down the reins, jumped to the ground, gave Caleb a toss into the air, caught him as he came down, squeaked like a pig, crowed like a rooster, and barked like a dog, till Caleb was wild with delight.

Everybody in and around Millbrook was acquainted with Dan. The housewives knew that his pans, dippers and coffee-pots were made of good tin; that his tubs and pails were equal to any to be found in Mr. Meek's store; and that Dan always paid a fair price for paper rags, pelts, old brass kettles, and the odds and ends of almost every thing.

People made fun of Dan as well as of his horse, but he was a universal favorite, for all that. They respected him because he was good to his mother, — a poor widow, who

lost her husband when Dan was a little boy in frock and trousers. Her husband was a wood-chopper, and worked in the lumber swamp in winter, but one day his fellow-workmen brought in his body, mangled by a falling tree. The wife, though crushed awhile by the blow, accepted it, and taught Dan to accept it, too, as God's providence. She had been asked to marry a second time, but had rejected the offer and was living in a little house in an out-of-the-way place, on a cross-road, where few people passed in summer and where the snowdrifts were piled even with the fences in winter, getting a living by knitting stockings, braiding palm-leaf hats, and selling eggs and chickens. Dan helped her by trotting down to Millbrook, even when he was a little bit of a fellow, with a basket of eggs or an armful of hats, carrying them to the store, and returning with stocking-yarn, a bundle of palm-leaf, a little sugar, tea and coffee, or with a small bag of flour upon his shoulder.

They lived two miles from school, and the snowdrifts in winter were deep; so he studied his spelling-book and learned the multiplication table at home.

Dan was not strong enough to swing an axe, as his father had done, or to hoe corn, but he must do something for a living; he could be a pedler. With his mother's help he started, when he was but a boy of sixteen, with a cart and an old horse.

His mother had taught him early in childhood a few fundamental principles, partly from the Bible, partly from her own ideas of things, such as these:—

Honesty is the best policy, because it is right.
Goodness and truth are better than money.
Do good whenever you can get a chance.
Get and give, and you will have all you need.

Mrs. Dishaway not only had enough for herself and Dan, but something for those who had hard work to make both ends of the year meet. If a watcher was wanted for anybody down with typhoid fever, or going with consumption, she was ready at a moment's notice. She had something in her cupboard — jelly or jam — to tempt the appetite. There was no nurse like Mother Dishaway. If little strangers came in any household, she was there to care for them. So it came about that she called herself second mother to half the children in town, — to Moses, White Hair, Linda, Bell, and scores of others.

Mrs. Dishaway squared her life by a text in the Psalms, and pinned her faith upon it: —

"Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land and verily thou shalt be fed."

It being his mother's faith, Dan insensibly appropriated it, and thus it was as natural for him to do little acts of kindness as to eat his dinner.

As a knight errant of feudal days notified the warden of a castle of his approach, so Dan heralded his coming to a farm-house by blowing a trumpet, and the boys and girls hearing it, clapped their hands and shouted, "Dan is coming! Dan is coming!"

There are men in the world who are friends to everybody, — universal friends, so full of good nature that they may be likened to the watering troughs by the roadside, put up for the refreshment of travellers, — man and beast alike, — connected by an aqueduct with an unseen mountain spring ever flowing. Dan was full of good humor and it bubbled up continually. The song he had sung was one of his own getting up. Although the people along his route had heard it again and again, it never was an old song, especially to the young folks. He sang it

while going up to a farm-house, and before getting down from his cart, with admiring groups in the doorway and at the windows.

While Dan was having his frolic with White Hair, Captain Krinkle was examining the horse.

"Blind of the right eye — a spavin on one leg — a ring-bone on the other — foundered — got the heaves — hide like an old hair trunk!" The Captain said it aloud, as if in soliloquy.

"Any more qualifications, Cap'n?"

There was a grin on Dan's face.

"Dan, why don't you knock that old rack-o'-bones on the head? He's a standing advertisement, — Oats wanted: inquire within. Better let the crows pick his bones," said the Captain.

"Let the crows pick his bones! Not yet, Cap'n. Ye see I have a sort of affection for the poor old critter, gest because he is despised and rejected by everybody. He ain't handsome, I'll confess, but handsome is that handsome does. Don't he draw my truck over these hills gest as well as if he was beautiful to look at? Don't he know every crook and turn in the road, notwithstanding he's blind of one eye? Cap'n, if you only knew how slow that horse can go, how much *stop* there is in him, and how much he can stand still, you would have a good deal of respect for him. What if he is a perpetual advertisement of oats wanted? Don't he get 'em — a half bushel a day? I'll acknowledge that they don't make him fat and that he is all skin and bones, but he is a good old critter, — has done heaps of work in his day and all for his victuals and drink. Seeing that he's a member of the cold-water society, his drink don't cost any thing though. Let the crows pick his bones? I couldn't have the heart to do it, Cap'n. I couldn't knock any thing in the head,

sheep, kitten, or dog, — unless the dog was running mad or going to bite somebody. I like to see 'em enjoying themselves."

Couldn't have the heart! It was a portrayal of his own character, — his good nature and kind-heartedness.

"Ah! I know what you want, White Hair; it is that tin horse on trucks that I've got in my cart, and you shall have it before I buy a single rag of your mother," he said, speaking to Caleb. Out came the toy from the cart in a twinkling.

"There! White Hair! I've brought that for you, and as that cute old feller, Shakspeare, once said about rosemary — it's for remembrance.

"I 'spose, Cap'n, you think I do that to get on your soft side, so that you will sell your pelts cheap; but it is no such thing. I do it because it makes Caleb happy, and makes me feel good. Now, that tin horse didn't cost me two cents, but I have made little White Hair happy from the tips of his fingers to the ends of his toes, and he will think of me all day, and to-morrow, and next week, and next year. Oh, I tell ye, Cap'n, there ain't many of us but what like to be thought of. Now I shall be as jolly as a lark all day long, and you'll feel good too, with White Hair trotting round rattling that thing on the floor. It will be sweet music, and Mrs. Krinkle will get a little more time to read, or do something about the house, or to rest, maybe. I've noticed that women don't get so much time to rest as they ought, and I know some men who will wake up to the fact by and by, when their hard-working wives have gone to sleep out in the graveyard. But as I was saying, Cap'n, — when Mrs. Krinkle sees White Hair happy with it, the smiles will run all over her face, and she will be glad down in her heart. Don't you see? It don't take only the littlest pebble to send the ripple

all over the mill-pond here, so if I make him happy and he makes you and your wife happy, and that sets all of us to making somebody else feel good, — why, you can't tell where it will stop. Now, I don't expect to get your sheep-skins one cent cheaper because I have given White Hair a tin horse. I shall pay you what I can afford to and now just bring 'em on."

"Dan, I wish all of us had your philosophy. We should be happier, all hands of us, than we are."

"Well, maybe, but you know I never went to school only long enough to get over to the Rule of Three, and all the education I've got has been picked up here and there, just as I pick up my rags. If I've got the philosophy I wasn't inoculated for it at college, but have got it in the natural way, and maybe it'll go hard with me."

"I notice that you quote from Shakspeare. I should like to know if you ever read his works?"

"Why, bless you, Cap'n, I've read every one of his plays, at odd jobs. You see I buy old rags and there is all sorts of truck that goes into my cart, — old newspapers, almanacs, letters, and books. I get old writs at the lawyers' offices, old sermons from the ministers, old bills at the stores, old books from the garrets here and there. Once I picked up an old copy of Shakspeare, and on rainy days, when I haven't any thing to do, I just make the acquaintance of Mrs. Macbeth and Mr. Hamlet, and all the rest of 'em. It is entertaining, besides being elevating. I've got half a dozen bushels of library at home tucked away in the garret, — all sorts of old books from old Cotton Mather up to Noah Webster's spelling-book, — and John Bunyan, John Milton, Dr. Watts, and I don't know who. If Rev. Mr. Canticle should happen to resign and you should want a supply of sermons for the deacons to read while you are looking up

another minister, just call on me; I've got several barrels full. Well, as I was saying, — all sorts of odds and ends get into my cart and lots of secrets, Cap'n."

Dan nodded his head, lowered his voice, and winked significantly to his listener and went on in a confidential manner.

"Family secrets. Now, Cap'n, I ain't going to tell you or anybody else what I know. I peddle tin-ware, — the best double block, thick rolled, extra milled, — but I don't dicker in family secrets. I want you to understand that. I ain't responsible for the family secrets getting into my cart; if folks are careless and put 'em into the rag-bag, when they ought to go into the fire, that is their lookout and not mine. I have a right to read 'em, but I haven't any right to tattle 'em. Why, I couldn't look a decent man in the eye if I should give myself up to peddling scandal. If I were to go into that business, how long do you think it would be before the women would slam the door in my face? and serve me right too. How long do you think it would be before little White Hair and all the rest of the tots would feel that I was a snake in the grass? which I ain't," said Dan, vehemently.

"I think that you have taken a sensible view of it, Dan."

"Well, Cap'n, I try to, but a tin peddler, if he keeps his eyes and ears open, has a chance to know a great deal about what is going on."

"That is so, but I never thought of it before."

"Why, Mrs. Krinkle, how do you do?" said Dan to the Captain's wife, who came upon the piazza at the moment. "I am real glad to see you so smiling and happy. And no wonder you are happy when you have such a nice fellow as little White Hair — to warm up your heart all day long."

"And, Deborah, how do you do?" he said to the rosy cheeked girl who was washing dishes in the kitchen, and who

came to the door with a towel in her hand. Dan had often noticed that Deborah was neat and trim, and had plump cheeks and a merry laugh.

He knew all the girls in Millbrook and in the surrounding towns, but there was something about Deborah — he couldn't hardly say what — that made him feel light-hearted whenever he saw her. It couldn't be because she was only sixteen years old, for there were other girls that were only sixteen, and they did not make every thing so sunny and pleasant as Deborah did by her presence. Dan was but twenty-one, so it could not be the difference of years. He knew that folks said he was a great gawky, and whenever he stood before Deborah he felt that what they said must be true.

"It is just like being in the sunshine to see you, Deborah."

"Ah! Jowler, how do you do?" he said, stooping down to caress the old dog that was looking up wistfully into his face, wagging his tail. "Noble old fellow." Jowler was usually very dignified toward strangers and had a low growl for those he did not like, but never a growl for Dan. He rubbed his head against Dan's legs and followed him round the yard. The cat came out from the house, climbed upon his shoulder, and laid her furry face against his cheek, purring a welcome. When the doves came flying through the air, Dan reached out his hand to them till they narrowed their circles and fluttered around his head, alighted at length at his feet and picked up the oats which he threw to them.

While Mrs. Krinkle was looking over his wares Dan went into the garden, stood by the bee-hives, made a low buzzing with his lips and took up a double handful from the great bunch of bees hanging on the hive. They crawled over his face, but they knew he was their friend, and bees do not often enact the part of Brutus and stab their friends. The whole animal creation seemed to be

under Dan's control. Horses that laid back their ears and snapped at other people with their teeth, rubbed their noses against his face and submitted to his caressing.

Dan was fond of music, and carried a violin, which he played by the hour as his horse plodded along the roads. He listened to the winds and imitated the sighing of the pines; caught up the song of the thrushes, the orioles, the larks and the bobolinks and wove them into melodies. The hum of the midge, the gurgling of the brook, the voices of children, were music to his ears, and filled him with a strange delight. There was hardly a child in Millbrook or along Dan's route of travel, that could not show a gift from him. Every little girl had a doll with carmine lips and cheeks, every boy a tin whistle or trumpet, or a horse on trucks. No wonder that parents and children alike were pleased when they heard his trumpet sending its resounding notes over the valley and out upon the hills. No matter where night overtook him, for he was welcome at every farm-house. Pleasant were the kitchens in the evenings when Dan was there to tell stories or to play the violin and to frolic with the children.

"Well, Jonathan, how do you do?" was Dan's respectful salutation to Jonathan Jolly, who had been hoeing corn in the field behind the barn, and who came in for a drink of water.

"Hullo, Rag Bag! how are you?" said Jonathan, squeezing Dan's right hand till the bones fairly cracked. It was Jonathan's little joke which he was accustomed to play upon his acquaintances. He took pleasure in seeing them wince under the grip of his iron muscles. It was like the turning of a vice.

"Pretty well, — there — there — there — that will do — I thank you," said Dan, writhing under the torture. "I see that you haven't forgot your old tricks," he said.

"What tricks?" Jonathan asked, endeavoring to put on an innocent look.

"If you and a Rocky Mountain grizzly should have a set-to, I'd bet on you," Dan replied, rubbing his right hand with his left to restore the circulation.

Jonathan was stout and broad-chested. He could lift great forkfuls of hay, or take up a barrel of cider as if it were only a gallon keg. Things went ahead whenever Jonathan put his shoulder to the wheel in earnest. He had blue eyes, and wore side whiskers, which gave him a manly appearance. Captain Krinkle employed him because he was up early in the morning and on hand when wanted and never shirked. Mrs. Krinkle liked him because he was kind to White Hair, and White Hair liked him because he whittled out whirligigs and windmills, and made him a pair of trucks and a little cart. Deborah liked him because he was good-looking. Besides, he helped her milk the cows, and when the work was done out of doors, took hold of the churn, and though the cream might be as thick as hasty pudding and the butter a long while in coming, he never let go of the dasher till it came. She liked him because — because — because — because — she liked him. Hers was a girl's reason and she kept it to herself.

Dan opened his cart and Mrs. Krinkle and Deborah looked over the pans and coffee-pots while Jonathan and Dan and Captain Krinkle were talking about the weather. "Now, Mrs. Krinkle, you know what my ware is: my coffee-pots and tin pans and skimmers are made of the best double refined tip-top tin, rolled out by a patent back action roller. It is all bran-fire new, and so bright that you can use the pans for looking glasses. I hain't but one price, and it is marked on every thing in the old cart.

Bring out all your rags, pelts and old brass kettles, your odds and ends. Take your own time. I ain't in a hurry." Then he took Caleb on his back and had a race with him round the yard, the little fellow laughing, crowing and clapping his hands.

Dan had noticed that women took delight in looking at the tin pans and dishes, even if they did not want to buy; that they were pleased to see the reflection of their faces in the shining metal, and he administered to their pleasure by never being in a hurry.

"What will you have, Jonathan, a jewsharp or a tin whistle?" said Dan, as Jonathan turned over the various articles in the cart.

Captain Krinkle and his wife and Deborah laughed at the sly thrust which Dan had given.

"I would buy a trumpet, only I don't want to deprive you from blowing your own horn," answered Jonathan.

"Hadn't you better have a sauce-pan? I've got some real nice ones, made of the best double refined tip-top tin; I am afraid, however, that they would be rather too small for you," said Dan.

Notwithstanding the bantering, Dan and Jonathan were good friends. It was only the coming together of flint and steel, and the sparks of course must fly. After a hearty laugh, Jonathan went to his work and Dan turned his attention to Deborah, who had come out with a basket filled with rags. She stood by his side with smiling eyes while he weighed them. It took him a great while to get the exact weight with the steelyards. He moved the poise a notch at a time and waited for the beam to tip, looking from the poise to Deborah and from Deborah to the poise. Before he ascertained the weight the poise dropped from the beam and came near falling on his toes. In taking

them out of the way he tipped over the basket and scat tered the rags upon the ground.

"Well, I declare, I am a noodle and no mistake," he said, getting down upon his knees to pick up the rags,— Deborah hastening to help him before the wind blew them away. Jonathan saw it from the field, and wished that he was there to give Dan a kick and tumble him headlong into the basket.

They soon had them gathered up, and then, with Deborah to move the poise, Dan made out to weigh them. Captain Krinkle and his wife had gone into the house, leaving Deborah to get all the pans, basins and dippers she needed. She stood with them in her hands while Dan closed his cart.

"I must have a drink of water right out of the northeast corner of the well before I go," said Dan.

"I will draw it for you," said Deborah, laying her basins on the grass and hastening to the well, pleased with his attentions, and really liking him because he was so kindhearted and good. Dan came and stood by her side while she was lowering the bucket.

"Don't you think those are two pretty good-looking creatures, considering who they are?" He pointed to the reflections of their faces in the well. She replied only by a laugh, and the next moment dashed them out by sinking the bucket into the water. The creaking of the sweep was sweet music in his ears, because Deborah was drawing water for him, as Rachel drew it for Jacob, and he wished she had ever so many sheep and lambs to draw water for, so that he could help her. He would not care if it took all day. He should like to do just as Jacob did,—help her and kiss her, but perhaps she would not like it, and he could not be rude to her He looked over the rim of

the dipper into her sparkling eyes, while drinking. There was mischief in them. She joggled the dipper and spilled the water in his face, and then begged his pardon so bewitchingly, that he wanted to clasp her to his heart and thank her for tormenting him.

"Good-by, bright eyes," said Dan, getting upon his cart and chirruping to his horse.

"We shall have some more rags by and by," said Deborah, smiling. Her words floated out sweetly and pleasantly on the summer air. He heard them through the day. The robins sang them, the swallows twittered them, the bees hummed them. He wove them into a melody. The winds took up the strain and wafted it to the pines, the brook babbled it. He heard it all day and dreamed of it at night.

CHAPTER V.

WHITE HAIR AT SCHOOL.

UPON the oaken seats of the school-house sat White Hair and his mates, — Moses Meek, Job Titicut, Ben Tottle, Miranda May, Linda Fair, Bell Blossom, Daisy Davenport and Mary Fielding. There were a troop besides, fifty or more, from little ones just learning the alphabet, up to big boys and girls who were ready to enter the academy. Miss Hyssop was teacher.

Although the golden beams of the summer sun streamed through the windows and along the floor, it was nevertheless a chilly place, Caleb thought, for the sharp eyes of Miss Hyssop were on him all the time. He remembered the grip she had given him — how it remained like a manacle on his arm — when she lifted him out of the jail in the graveyard. When he thought of the many years during which she had been a teacher, and of the great amount of knowledge she had imparted, when he saw how thin and spare she was, he came to the conclusion that by and by, if she did not stop, she would teach herself all away.

It was dull business for little White Hair to sit through the long forenoons and longer afternoons on a bench so high that his feet did not reach the floor.

"Put down your hands and sit up straight, Master Caleb," said Miss Hyssop, if perchance he put his hands

above his head or leaned in any direction. If he did not put them down on the instant, Miss Hyssop rapped his knuckles. Now and then he would chew paper spit-balls on the sly and snap them at Randa or Linda or Moses, but the chances were that for every spit-ball he had two pinchings of his ears. If he rocked to and fro, or twirled his thumbs to make the time fly faster, Miss Hyssop thumped his head against the ceiling. If he was tired and sleepy and thought to take a nap, just as he was nicely fixed he found himself sprawling on the floor, a hooked nose hanging over him and sharp eyes looking him through.

"Night is the time to sleep," said Miss Hyssop, picking him up and sitting him down with a bump on the seat. Twice during the forenoon he stood with his toes to a crack in the floor and ducked his head when she said "Attention."

When Miss Hyssop's back was turned, it was a pleasure to tickle Bell Blossom slyly on the ear with a straw. Caleb liked to look at Bell, she had such dark glossy hair, that curled all over her head, and black eyes that had a bright twinkle, and there were smiles always frisking around the dimples on her cheeks. Not for the world would he offend her, but then it was excellent fun to see her hand come up with a slap to brush away the fly when the straw tickled her. Bell was so good-natured, that when she found it was not a fly, instead of getting angry she took it in good part and shook her fist at him, with the smiles running all over her face, and though she did not whisper the words, she made her mouth say, "I'll pay you, old fellow." In her good nature she soon forgot all about paying him, and only wished she could help him out of the scrape when Miss Hyssop took him by the ear across the room to the jail under the desk, where she could stow away a culprit

and keep him in confinement. Caleb could look out through a crack upon the school, and the school could look in upon him, as if he were a wild animal in a cage.

"There's the monkey!" Moses whispered it to Bell on one side and to Ben Tottle on the other. When Miss Hyssop turned round to see what was going on, Moses was studying hard, saying over to himself, "Seven times seven is forty-nine, eight times seven is fifty-six." Miss Hyssop heard the tittering and giggling behind her, and Bell and Linda had their ears boxed, and Ben caught a half dozen red-hot blows on the palms of his hands, but Moses was studying so hard that nothing happened to him. They became acquainted with all the punishments that Miss Hyssop could devise. She made them sit on nothing, crooking the joints of the knees, and then varied the exercise by seating them on a sharp stone. They stood with their arms raised aloft like the fakirs of India; held sticks in their mouths; had marks innumerable set against their names on a "black list" pinned against the wall behind Miss Hyssop's seat. Caleb now and then found himself sandwiched between Bell and Linda, which was indeed capital punishment, — to say nothing of having his ears pinched and pulled and his head bumped against the ceiling. Moses could get his lessons in a minute or two at any time, and have all the rest of the day to make pictures on his slate, or whittle out whirligigs on the sly. When he had nothing else to do he speared flies with a pin, and laughed to see them kick, and he enjoyed it all the more because Linda and Randa pitied the poor creatures and covered their eyes with their hands when he held them up.

Moses had as much candy as he wanted from his father's store. He almost always had some for Bell and

Linda and Daisy, and other girls, and he gave of his treasures to Ben and Job, but not to Caleb.

Linda was at the head of the class. Moses was next, then Miranda, Job and Bell, then a long row of boys and girls. Caleb was at the foot, and had stood there so long that he had lost all heart.

"It ain't no use to try," he said to Job.

"You just keep digging away," was the reply of this great good-natured fellow, with big ears, wide forehead and mild blue eyes. His ears were so large that Moses made fun of them.

"Job ought to hear more and know more than the rest of us, he's got such thundering great ears," he said, using one of the words he had heard in his father's store, where the loungers of the village were accustomed to sit in the evening. Although Job had big ears, he was ever ready to give Caleb or anybody else a lift, if he could.

"Caleb is the bob to the kite," said Moses in a whisper to Randa, looking contemptuously down the line. Upon the play-ground he called him "bobby," and varied it to "baby" and "booby." There was a sting in the words, and Caleb informed Job privately that if Moses didn't mind what he was up to that he would catch it."

"I'll tell you what to do," said Job.

"What?"

"Get up above him."

How to do it was the question. He would try. The taunt stimulated him. Job encouraged him. He astonished them all by spelling a word which Moses and all below him had missed. Miss Hyssop was surprised to see him march up the line and take his place next to the head, doing what he had never done before. She wondered what was going to happen. There was a strange

fluttering about White Hair's heart when he took his place beside Linda and saw her smile of welcome; but the pleasure of the victory was turned to pain when he saw the tears starting from Randa's eyes and rolling down her cheeks.

Moses grew red in the face and there was a choking in his throat, but Job nodded his head to Caleb as much as to say, "I am glad of it." Moses soon got over the uncomfortable feeling, and when Miss Hyssop's back was turned, gave Caleb a rap with his fist in the hollow of his leg that almost brought him to the floor. Caleb was about to give Moses a chuck under the ear, but Miss Hyssop turned round to see what was going on, and he had no opportunity of paying him in his own coin.

It was Caleb's first victory. It thrilled him. The bright light from Linda's eyes shone into his soul and gave him a pleasure such as he never before had experienced.

"I ain't a booby. I'll show them what I can do," he said to himself, elated by the triumph, but at the next round made a mistake and found Moses stepping above him. The next word sent him down another peg, and before the day was done he was back in his old place at the foot. He was disappointed, chagrined and irritated. He felt like knocking somebody down, Moses in particular. He was certain that Miss Hyssop was partial, that the easy words had been put to Moses and the hard ones to himself. He believed that she had ever looked upon him with suspicion and prejudice from that Sunday when he got the maiden all forlorn mixed up with the shepherds, and felt that she regarded him as an irreverent fellow who delighted to do wicked things, and that she must ever be on the watch for him. He recalled what Deborah once had told him, that Miss Hyssop had intended to be Mrs. Captain

Krinkle, and that she looked cross enough to bite off a board nail when his father came home from down country with his beautiful young wife, taking everybody by surprise.

"It was lucky for me," said Caleb to himself, as he thought upon it. "I guess I've escaped a lot of spankings."

But if there were punishments without number at school, there was pleasure unspeakable when school was out, in building dams by the roadside after a shower had filled the ditches; in floating shingles and bits of board down stream, making believe they were rafts on a river. On Saturday afternoons, what joy to play in the barn with Moses, Job, Ben, and a dozen other boys, hiding in out-of-the-way places, under the horse-crib, in the grain-bins, behind the cattle stalls, or covering themselves with hay in nooks and corners, and darting out at the right moment to reach the goal! What fun to jump from the high beams and go down with a swoop like that of a night hawk, landing upon the straw in the mow beneath!

Jonathan Jolly put up a swing under the elm, and Linda, Miranda and Bell, and all the other girls came to enjoy it. How nice to have Caleb push them, sending them through the air! If his arms ached now and then, he forgot it when he saw the bright glow on Randa's cheeks. It was a pleasure to do what he could for such a dear girl, so unselfish, so kind, so considerate of the happiness of Linda and Bell and all the rest, saying after she had taken a few turns, "There, Caleb, now let me stop. I have had my share."

Caleb did not know which he liked best, Miranda or Linda. Bell sometimes ran away with his cap, or tossed it over the fence, tickled his ears or put pebbles in his shoes in fun, with the laughter bubbling from her lips. Miranda and Linda never played any such pranks; yet

they loved to have a good time, and there was no place where they could enjoy themselves any better than at Captain Krinkle's. No matter if they turned the house topsy-turvy now and then. Mrs. Krinkle liked to see them do it. And it was the girl with violet eyes, the one that seemed so quiet, the one who would take only a few turns in the swing, that the others might have a chance, who was their ringleader.

"What shall we do next, Randa?" That was the question when they had exhausted the pleasure of a particular romp or game, and Randa was seldom at a loss to know what it should be.

CHAPTER VI.

WORTH HER WEIGHT IN GOLD.

THE blacksmith's home was a small unpainted house with a low roof, standing on the hillside, away from the main street, and overlooking the mill pond, the village, and the valley. It was surrounded by maple trees, whose branches overshadowed it. There was a stoop, or porch, at one end, supported by posts, with a bench beneath it, where Mr. Fair often sat in the evening, when his work for the day was done, and smoked his pipe. A woodbine crept over the low roof, and hung in festoons around the corner and along the eaves. There was a plat of green grass between the house and the street, and beside the path leading to the gate Linda planted her sweet williams, petunias, marigolds, hollyhocks and asters. Morning glories opened their purple lips around the windows, and a scarlet runner twisted itself around the pine post that supported one corner of the porch, and worked its way up to the eaves. There were flowers in the bay window of the sunny little sitting-room. The view from the window embraced the entire valley, the farms upon the hills, and the distant mountains.

There were rows of plates, teacups and saucers on the dresser; there were rag mats upon the floor, braided by Linda and her mother, in red, green and blue concentric

circles. The walls were adorned with pictures of Adam and Eve in the garden, and Christ blessing children, and a colored print of two donkeys in a field, with these words written beneath, "When shall we three meet again?" The blacksmith was very fond of asking folks to find the third donkey in the puzzle. There was an open fireplace, which Linda kept filled with green pine boughs in summer, and where a cheerful wood fire burned in winter. There was a table and light-stand, an arm-chair for the blacksmith, a rocking-chair for his wife, a chest of drawers with a large Bible lying upon it, and a shelf over it filled with books.

In the gable above the sitting-room was Linda's chamber, with a window, where she could sit and behold all the beauties of the valley. She was an only child, and so ready to help about the house that her father named her Little Maid.

Linda was up by the break of day helping about the breakfast, laying the plates, making the coffee, for the fire must be lighted in the forge, and the hammer must be clinking on the anvil by sunrise. But before going to his work the blacksmith read a chapter in the Bible and all three sang a hymn; and then, kneeling, he asked God to bless himself, his wife, and their darling child; to give them their daily bread; to quench their thirst with the water of life; to bring them and all their neighbors day by day into his kingdom. It was a favorite idea with him that they need not wait till after death to get, as it were, into heaven, but that a daily acknowledgment of God's goodness and of Christ's love would so purify them that there would be heaven on earth. He was sure that it might be so, else why should Christ have said, "The kingdom of God is within you." He repeated it often,

and believed it heartily, and it became so wrought into his being that everybody could see "the kingdom" in his face. The farmers, who came to get their horses shod and chains mended, discovered it in his honest work. If anybody was in trouble and needed sympathy or help, they came to the man who had so much of heaven in his heart.

After prayer the blacksmith kissed his wife on her lips and Little Maid on her cheeks, eyes, forehead, and, last of all, on her lips, and then went singing down the hill to his shop. It was an old building, weather-beaten without and dingy within, but a pleasant place to White Hair and his mates, and to Bell and her companions, who often stopped on their way to school to see the flames leap up the narrow chimney. Mr. Fair allowed them to try their hands at the bellows. He had many nice stories to tell, and always spoke to them so pleasantly that they looked upon him as one of their best friends. When he saw how frightened Bell, Randa, Daisy, Mary, and his own darling Linda were when the sparks flew in their faces, he said, —

"The time will come, little chickens, when you won't be afraid of the sparks."

"When we get to be big grown up girls, we shan't be afraid of 'em," said Bell.

"Of course you won't; you'll like to have them round you then," said the blacksmith, with a merry twinkle in his eyes.

The girls looked at one another, wondering what he meant.

"*You* will catch them, if the rest don't," he said, bending down and kissing Bell, and receiving a kiss in return. Why it was that Bell would be more likely than any of the others to catch the sparks flying out from the forge, was a mystery they could not comprehend.

"Why shall I catch them?"

"Because you've got curly hair and rosy cheeks, and you'll catch them with your eyes." Deeper than ever the riddle, and they looked into each other's faces, wondering what it might mean.

"You'll get up a welding heat, all of you, I guess, some day."

The flames were roaring, and the bright sparks were darting out from the forge, for the blacksmith was getting up a welding heat, and Zach Beetle, a great overgrown boy, was bearing down upon the lever that worked the bellows with all his might.

"Ready," said the blacksmith to Zach, who left the lever and seized his sledge hammer as Mr. Fair laid the two pieces of iron, hot from the fire, upon the anvil. How the sparks flew when Zach began to strike. "Tank — tank," it went, and then the blacksmith's small hammer, in his right hand, came in "tink — tink," and then it was "tink — tank, — tink — tank, — tink — tank," till the blacksmith said "That will do," and Zach rested, while the little hammer went "tink — tink — tink," till the deep red glow faded away, and the two pieces were united in one so perfectly that the bright eyes looking on could not discover where they were joined.

"That is the way with true love between friend and friend," said the blacksmith. Then after drawing his bare arm across his brow to wipe away the sweat, he began to sing. He sang at his work, in the choir on Sunday, and at home with his sick wife, who was not able to enjoy much of the good things of this life. The people of Millbrook, when they heard the blacksmith's hammer ringing from morning till night, keeping time to his singing, said that he was one of the happiest men alive.

At noon, Little Maid carried his dinner to him in a basket,

with a tin pail filled with coffee. One of the artists who came up from Boston to take studies from nature, made a sketch of the blacksmith at dinner, and of Linda with her sweet face, earnest, longing eyes, and dark brown hair, wearing a straw hat with pink ribbon, brushing away the charcoal dust, laying a white napkin on the bench, taking from the basket a plate of cold meat and brown bread, two large slices of wheat bread and a piece of apple pie. He had but to set his tin pail of coffee on the coals of the forge a moment and he could have it smoking hot. While he was eating Linda sat by his side looking into his eyes, and put a pink into the button-hole of his vest, so that while he was at work in the afternoon he would think of her. When he was through with his dinner he filled his pipe and had a good smoke, while Little Maid picked up the dishes and put them in the basket, and went up the road to her home, happy in the thought that she had been able to do something for her father and mother.

In the calm summer evening, when his work was done, the blacksmith sat with his wife and daughter on the bench beneath the woodbine, and sang, Mrs. Fair singing the alto, Linda the soprano, and he the bass. As the twilight faded, and the sounds of the day were dying, when there was heard only the murmuring of the water and the chirping of the crickets, the people of the village listened to the strains that floated downward on the evening air. The old folks who were nearly through with this world, when they heard the hymn, coming, as it were, from the skies, wiped the tears from their eyes, for it set them to thinking of the dear ones gone on before them who were singing in the choir of the Redeemer. And the men who were sitting on the piazza of the hotel, telling stories, stopped their loud laughter and left out an oath now and then, for they felt that it was not just the thing to swear while listening to such heavenly music.

On a pleasant midsummer afternoon, when school was out, Linda went tripping down the hill beneath the elms, with a basket in her hand, to accept Captain Krinkle's invitation to go into his fields and pick strawberries. Caleb went with her down a green lane into the meadow. They walked amid the clover blooms where the rich red berries were ripening in the sun, filled their baskets, ate till satisfied, and then strolled by the shore of the pond. They stood upon the pebbled beach, looked down into the clear water, and saw a paradise of green fields and woodlands reflected from the depths, and the white lilies floating upon the surface.

"How I wish I had a lily," said Linda.

"I will get one for you."

"Oh, no, don't go."

But Caleb was already carrying out his plans. There were mill logs resting against the shore and he was laying a board across two of them, thus making a raft.

"Oh, don't go; you will get drowned," said Linda again.

"No, I shan't. I ain't afraid," he replied. He was thinking how delightful it would be to see the fragrant flowers in her hands, to hear her say, "I thank you," to see the lighting up of her eyes. She would think that he was somebody, after all, notwithstanding he was down at the foot of his class, and made a botch of it when he attempted to recite his lessons.

He was amid the lilies, and his adventure would soon be crowned with success. He pulled them up one by one, reaching his bare arm down into the water, to get them with as long stems as possible, so that Linda could tie them round her fair neck if she chose. The raft was slowly separating. Then the logs shot out suddenly from underneath his feet, and he went down into the water. There was a splash, a stifled cry. There were strange noises in his ears. He tried to scream,

but the sound came up in bubbles. He struck out wildly with his arms, thrust his hands upwards toward the sunshine, but felt himself going down still deeper. He touched the bottom, came up and saw the sun and the trees, and looked around for Linda, but she was not there. He thought he saw her running away as fast as she could across the meadow, and wondered how she could be so cruel as to leave him there to drown. "O Linda, how can you! I was getting them for you!" He tried to call her, but she was too far away to hear his reproachful cry. The water was in his eyes, his ears and his nostrils. He gasped for breath, but swallowed water instead. Oh, the agony that he experienced as he thrust up his hands in frantic efforts to catch the unsubstantial air!

Down again. How hard it was to clutch at nothing, to feel himself going down, down, farther than he had gone before! but reaching the bottom, he kicked against it and rose to the light once more.

He caught a glimpse of the fields, the barn, the house, and the old elm in front of it. He never would behold them again; in a moment the scene would fade from his sight forever. There was the village, the mill, the schoolhouse, the meeting-house, the golden hands of the clock. He saw, or thought he saw, Dan Dishaway's red cart and old horse standing in the road; or was it memory going over all the past?

And now the ripples only chafed the shore; they died away and the water was calm and peaceful. The boy and girl that tossed their hands and laughed so gleefully were gone from the picture. The struggle was ended. Caleb could see the lily stems running up to the surface, and wondered if he could not climb them, as Jack did his bean vine, and so get up once more to the sunlight. The fishes

came and looked at him, opening their curious mouths. He thought that one was making fun of him, and looked like Moses Meek, and wondered if he had turned to a fish. There were others with ghastly faces, like those upon the stones in the graveyard, and he thought of that Sunday in the long ago when himself, Randa, Linda and Bell ate their gingerbread on the grass-grown mounds. All the years passed by. He was in the school-house at the foot of the class; now he marched to its head and stood by the side of Linda and saw her smile of encouragement; now he was listening to the organ; now it was the robins saying "White Hair! White Hair!" now it was the bell, and mourners were weeping and the funeral train was winding down the path, and he seemed to go.

Meanwhile, Linda, pale and tearful, was running over the green meadows, away from the fearful scene. Never before had her feet flown so swiftly. Her hat was gone and her hair was streaming in the wind. Once she fell, and the coarse gravel cut her fingers and bruised the palms of her hands, but she did not heed the blood that oozed from the wounds. Help was at hand: Dan was riding down the road.

"Dan!" It was a faint cry, and Dan was listening to the bobolinks and did not hear it.

"Dan!" but the wheels were rattling in the ruts and the words did not come to him.

"Dan! Dan! Dan!" The reins tightened and his old horse came to an instant stand-still. He looked up and down the road to see who it was that called, and did not discover Linda running toward him through the field till he heard her say,—

"O Dan, run quick; he's drowning!"

"Who — what — where?" Dan asked in a breath.

"Caleb, in the pond!" Her strength was gone; she could say no more, but stood panting for breath. She could only point to the pond.

In an instant Dan is away, leaping through the air. He clears at a bound a ditch that has been cut through the meadow, places one hand upon the topmost rail of a fence and is over it in an instant, and with no slackening of speed reaches the shore of the pond. No ripple disturbs its surface. Not a breath of air mars the placid beauty of the mirror. The circling waves that rolled from the spot where White Hair disappeared have died away upon the pebbled beach, and there is not even a bubble to mark the spot.

"What a fool I am! Why didn't I ask Little Maid where it was? Haste makes waste. Keep cool, Dan; you've got a precious job on hand. Don't loose your head."

He has a habit of talking to himself aloud. He tears open his vest, loosens the red handkerchief about his neck, fans himself with his hat, as he stands upon the bank looking into the water. "Where could he have gone down?" He discovers footsteps in the sand and follows them round a shelving point. There is the raft, there Caleb's palm-leaf hat with its blue ribbon floating on the water.

"Down in there somewhere," he says aloud, kicking off his shoes, dashing his hat to the ground and taking off his coat and vest. The water is shoal near the shore, but at the farther edge of the lily-pads it suddenly deepens, and there are stumps and water-logged timbers on the bottom that have been lying there for many years. There is no rock above the surface from which he can plunge head foremost and go down with the momentum, and even if he could do so it would be at the risk of beating his own

brains out against the sunken timbers; he must grope his way in the darkness beneath. He wades slowly in. The lily stems twine about his legs and impede his way, but he makes a path through them.

"Now for it." He takes in a great draught of air, ducks his head under the water, struggles a moment amid the thick stems, then works his way down — down — down to the sunken timbers. It is dim twilight around him. He can see dark objects, — logs and stumps. The gnarled roots, twisted and intertwined, bring to mind a nest of snakes that he once discovered, and he recalls the stories he has read of the monsters of the sea, that reach up their arms and seize a ship by its rigging. What if a snake were to attack him! What if he were to get his feet entangled amid the roots!

"Ah, there he is!" He reaches the dark object, but finds it a shadow. Thinks again that he sees him and moves quickly on, to find it only a root. His strength is going, and he must rise. He comes to the surface and feels the warm sunshine on his face, sees the exact position of the raft, and then goes down to deeper darkness, and strains his eyes to catch the faintest outlines of the form he wishes to discover. He sees something white. He swims towards it. God be praised! It is White Hair,—his pale face upturned toward the light. The fishes are swimming around him, as if assembling to a feast.

Up — up — up, with his precious prize. He comes to the surface, reaches the shore, climbs the bank and sinks upon the ground. His strength is gone. He gasps for breath.

"This won't do, Dan. Shake yourself, old fellow."

He springs to his feet. It is the will power, — the energy which lies behind all common effort; it is the rising of the old guard, as at Waterloo, that wins in great emergencies.

He is himself again, with nerves like steel, going upon the run across the fields, with White Hair lying limp upon his shoulder.

There is a great commotion in Millbrook, at Captain Krinkle's, at the hotel, at the blacksmith's shop. Men, women and children are running, and Dr. Mayweed, with his little leather trunk in his hand, down the road toward White Hair's home.

"Is he dead? Is he dead?" they shout to Dan, who is approaching the house.

"Can't say; hot blankets, quick!"

It is all that Dan can utter as he gives him to his father's arms. The neighbors, with tearful eyes, catching their breath, wringing their hands, are crowding around, to see the cheeks that were so fresh and fair now so pale and wan. His lips are motionless, his eyes are dull and fixed.

"Is he dead, Doctor?"

But Dr. Mayweed, instead of answering, gently bids them leave the room, all save the father and mother; and the neighbors as they go out, say to themselves, "Just so did the Great Physician when he raised Jairus' daughter."

Deborah and the neighbors are flying here and there, heating blankets, doing what they can, running at every call and motion of the doctor. Randa and Bell and a troop of girls are gathered around Linda, listening with white lips and fluttering hearts and tearful eyes to the terrible story. Oh, if they could only do something to help bring him to life!

"I'll tell you what we can do," said Randa; "we can hold a prayer-meeting." When her mother wanted any thing she asked God for it, and why should not they ask the good Lord to bring Caleb back to life again! Wouldn't he, if they asked him? It was childhood's simple faith

and trust, undisturbed by theological doubts or scientific unbelief.

"We will go out into the garden, under the pear trees, where the old folks won't see us," said Randa. They could trust God, but not the grown up folks. They could say the Lord's prayer, for they said it every morning at school. Beneath the trees they kneeled, Randa, priestess of the most High God, leading them. After "deliver us from evil," she said, "and make Caleb well again, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever, Amen."

It is all dark to White Hair. He is in terrible pain, but hears voices around him. Where is he? Through the dim haze that fills the room he can see his mother bending over him. His father is there, and Dr. Mayweed, who opens his little black trunk, letting out a multitude of imprisoned smells. He looks into Caleb's eyes, feels of his wrist, takes out his old-fashioned silver watch and looks at it steadily to see how fast it ticks; then nods his head and says, as if talking to some one in vacancy, "Doing nicely, doing nicely; rest and quiet and a soothing draught will bring him up all right. Narrow chance, though; good, brave girl,—got common sense; legged it down the street for me the first thing; worth her weight in gold.

"Got a little ducking, didn't you, my lad?" he says, turning to Caleb with a kindly smile; and adds, "If it hadn't been for Linda I don't know what would have happened. But you must lie still now and rest and not try to talk." He puts the smells into prison once more and goes out of the room, leaving Caleb with his father and mother.

How good it is to feel his mother's hand upon his brow!

The words of Dr. Mayweed are running in his ears, — "If it hadn't been for Linda." Then she didn't run away to leave him to drown. Blessed Linda! He would be good to her forever.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SPECTRE THAT APPEARED TO MR. MEEK.

THE counting-room in Mr. Meek's store was a small apartment, furnished with two arm-chairs that had seen long service. The rounds upon which the occupants were accustomed to put their feet were much worn, and the arms and posts bore evidence of having been whittled by jack-knives. An empty nail-keg in one corner served for a seat when there were more persons than chairs in the room. The pine table, standing where the light from the window fell directly upon it, was hacked and chipped on the edges, as if some one had been whittling it to kill time, or had been lost in thought and had cut it unwittingly. The rack nailed to the wall above the table was filled with old day-books and journals, and the pine case near the window, divided into compartments and pigeon holes, was crammed with papers, bills and receipts, yellow with smoke and covered with dust. Nails and pegs were driven into the wooden partition between the counting-room and the store, upon which Mr. Meek hung his hat and overcoat when he began work in the morning, and from which he took down his linen duster, with ink spots and stains upon its skirts and sleeves.

It could not be called a pleasant room, although the sun streamed in at the window which looked toward the south.

At the farther end were trunks and boxes, and old boots that were run over at the heels and were out at the toes. There were cobwebs in the corners and dust on the papers. Although it was not an attractive room, it answered Mr. Meek's purpose. He could sit there and go over the columns of figures in his ledger, examine the papers in the pigeon holes, while his clerks were attending to customers in the store, and if he wished to know who was there, or what his clerks were doing, he had but to pull out one of the pegs in the pine partition and the whole store was in range of his vision. None of the clerks, not even Mr. Sharp, the head salesman, knew that Mr. Meek could bring them all under his eye in a twinkling by pulling out the peg on which the linen duster usually hung. It was a piece of strategy on the part of Mr. Meek, which enabled him to keep track of a great many things, for, by applying his ear to the hole he could hear what his clerks were saying, and what the topic of conversation might be among the group of loungers gathered round the stove on a winter's evening.

Mr. Meek was in the prime of life. He had a florid face, very white teeth, sandy side whiskers and red hair, which he usually brushed in the morning, but not unfrequently combed with his fingers during the day when absorbed in thought. He had a gracious way of saying "Yes, yes," to pretty much all anybody said, and if he differed from any one it was with a depreciation of his own opinion, as if whatever he might think of the matter was of no possible account. If he did not reply, "Yes, yes," there was a nodding of the head, as if he would say, "I acquiesce in all your statements."

Mr. Meek lived in a small house near Captain Krinkle's, into which he moved when he first came to Millbrook.

By one way and another, by cash and by barter, by buying butter and eggs, poultry and pelts, by looking keenly after profits, by steering clear of loss, gaining a little here and more there, by accommodating his customers if they wanted a few dollars in cash to help themselves round a corner, by charging interest, or by saying, "Never mind the interest," if it was for *his* interest so to do, by knowing always how to butter his bread, he had raked together quite a dust heap. In the heap there were bonds, mortgages, stocks, lands, and notes of hand. He was not satisfied with what he had done; it was only a drop in the bucket as to what he intended to do.

His son Moses, being his only child, was Mr. Meek's idol. The idol could help himself to raisins, figs, candy, nuts, or any thing else that pleased him, and if he sometimes turned things topsy-turvy and was saucy to the clerks, they must make the best of it. If he played off any of his pranks upon unsuspecting customers, unhitching their horses upon the sly, jumping into the wagons and taking rides up and down the street, they were compelled to put up with it, because it was Mr. Meek's boy that did it.

"He is a little Sancho," said Dan Dishaway, comparing him not to the jolly esquire of "Don Quixote," but adopting a name which popularly was supposed to have reference to the father of all mischief. Moses tied a thistle to the tail of Dan's horse, and the animal went up the street like the wind, making a great clattering of tin pans, and smashing things generally when he turned a corner and tipped the cart, with all its contents, bottom side up into the ditch.

"I am sorry, Dan," said Mr. Meek, "but it is only the Fourth of July in him boiling over. I'll pay the damage. But didn't the old horse go! Why, Dan, I had no idea

there was so much *go* in him!" and Mr. Meek laughed as he remembered how the ungainly animal went dashing through the street.

"Boys will be boys, you know, Dan. I reckon Moses will make his way in the world. He'll come out all right in the end," he added.

Mr. Meek planned not only his own business, but laid plans for his son. He intended to give him a good start in the world, — the best instruction that money could secure at the academy and the college. He saw him taking the valedictory at Harvard or Yale; saw him a lawyer making a plea at the bar or a speech in Congress, — holding that body spell-bound by his eloquence, and every body from Maine to Texas reading it in the newspapers; saw him a judge or minister plenipotentiary to one of the great powers of Europe. Honor and fame would attend him, and would be reflected back from the son to the father. For such a son, with such a possible future before him, he would labor night and day, and pile the dust-heap so high that there never should be any lack of money to make his a splendid career.

Mr. Meek sat in his counting-room alone in the evening, going over the accounts in his ledger. The shutters were up, the clerks gone. It was no unusual thing for him thus to remain late into the night, keeping a vigilent eye on all the transactions of those who worked for him, upon the debit and credit side of all who traded with him.

Although the sitting-room at home was a pleasant apartment, with a Brussels carpet on the floor, and a lounge where he might lie and look at the pictures on the walls or gaze into the coals upon the hearth, with books upon the table, and although Mrs. Meek was sitting there with no one to help her pass the time away, Mr. Meek preferred to stay at

the store, — to be in his den, with the spiders looking down upon him from the dark and dirty corners. He was more at home there than in the sitting-room, and the company of the spiders was quite as enjoyable as the presence of Mrs. Meek. He liked to look at them when they were weaving their webs, doing it so ingeniously and adroitly, the lines running in every direction, with a den down in a corner or hole. It was a pleasure to see the flies entangling themselves in the meshes, to see how quickly the spiders ran and gave them a little nip in the nape of the neck and lashed them to the rigging by winding a rope around them, making them secure, and then picking their bones. And Mr. Meek smiled when he thought of himself as sitting in his den, and of the lines he had stretched out here and there, and of the way he was roping in some unsuspecting people; but the uncomfortable reflection came to Mr. Meek that he had been taken in by Mrs. Meek. She was fifteen years or more older than himself, and the difference in their ages was more apparent now than it was on the day of their marriage. He could not wink out of sight the fact that while he was yet a young man, she was getting to be an old woman.

A spectre followed him in all his wanderings, — occupied a seat at the dinner-table, and made itself at home in his chamber. If his intention had been to get money, hers had been to secure a husband. If he had concealed his object and vowed that he adored her, she had covered up her years by ronge and hair-dye. He had expected a fortune, but Mrs. Meek's father had handed her over to him, while keeping her fortune in his own pocket. Upon the whole, Mr. Meek could not resist the conclusion that he himself had been taken in. There was no love between him and his wife. Happiness in married life! He did not know the meaning of the word.

There came an evening when Mr. Meek looked over his drawers. Among the many old letters, he came upon one which he had read before, which he had many times resolved to burn, and yet, somehow, he could not quite make up his mind to commit it to the flames. He knew that every line upon the sheet had been written in agony, that tears, welling up from a loving heart, had fallen thick and fast upon the page; but notwithstanding all that, he could not see it disappear in ashes, for, like a talisman, it brought back to him all the happiness he had ever known.

As the concussion of a cannon fired above the calm surface of a lake brings up the dead that may be lying beneath, so that writing brought up — ah! what did it bring? A dark-eyed girl, poor in purse, but endowed with a wealth of beauty, who had given him all her love. He had bowed down before her, sworn to Heaven that he loved her, that he would be true to her forever. She had believed him, trusted him, lingered by his side when to linger was a sin. All the pure wine of her life had been pressed out for him, and then he had basely deserted her. For what? For money which he thought would come from a rich father-in-law, but had obtained only a wife old enough to be his mother. He ground his teeth together.

"Curse him!" The malediction was for the father-in-law, and Mr. Meek, as he uttered it, sprang from his chair and walked up and down the apartment with wrinkles in his brow and his fists firmly clenched, thinking of the past, wondering what had become of the deserted one, and of the child, which, if living, might call him father. It was not remorse that disturbed his peace of mind, nor sense of shame that mantled his cheek. He had been outwitted, had been cheated in a trade, had a portionless wife on his hands, and there was no help for it. That was the bitterness.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW RANDA WENT OVER THE RIVER.

OTHER teachers beside Miss Hyssop have had their patience tried by roystering boys and mischievous girls. Other teachers, like her, have been at a loss to know what to do with them, — have exhausted invention and folded their hands in despair. If Caleb and his mates found it difficult to get on with her, she had found it difficult to get on with them. Being sharp and angular mentally as well as physically, it is not strange that when all other methods failed she fell back on the counsel of the school committee, who were deeply impressed with the importance of maintaining law and order, and had said to her, "Whack it into them! Whack it into them!" So it came about that the current of life was not altogether unruffled, as Caleb and his mates discovered to their sorrow at times. Law and order was a comprehensive term. It was the acquisition of knowledge by rule and ferule. Caleb could not see how it was possible to get vulgar fractions into his mind when there was so much fun underneath his jacket that must come out. Though he covered his mouth with his hands to keep in the laughter, it bubbled out now and then. How could he help it when Bell and Daisy, for the fun of it, changed dresses at recess, and

Daisy came into school with skirts that swept the floor, while Bell, being taller by six inches, displayed that much of red petticoat. How could he help boiling over when Randa, having tied the lacings of her boots together, could only shuffle her feet three inches at a time when called into the floor to recite her lesson? But Caleb did not laugh when Randa, having sat down on a bent pin which Moses had placed in her seat, jumped up again with a little scream that set all the school to giggling. If it did not hurt Randa, it was an insult, and Caleb resolved he would let Moses know that he could not play such pranks upon the girls with impunity. At noon Caleb let Moses know what he thought of it by giving him a clip on the side of his head, pulling his nose and giving him a kick when he turned to run.

"I'll tell Miss Hyssop of you."

"Tell her if you want to."

Moses carried out his threat, and Miss Hyssop gave Caleb law on his right hand and order on his left till they were black and blue. Randa's eyes filled with tears when she saw him suffering punishment for her sake, but behind the tears was a look of gladness. Although she did not say "I thank you," Caleb could see that she respected him for hating any thing that was mean.

There came a day when Randa was not at school.

"A black mark against Miranda," said Miss Hyssop, making a large black mark against her name. Randa was so innocent and good that she could only think of a black mark against her own name, never against anybody's else, as implying moral taint, so deep that no subsequent right doing could make her wholly pure as before. Even if she were excused and the marks erased, the fact that they had been there and that everybody could see what a wicked little sin-

ner she was, became the one bitter drop in her cup, which otherwise was filled with happiness.

The forenoon slipped away and Randa did not make her appearance. Linda and Bell wondered what could have happened to keep her at home, and there was not a scholar in the room that did not miss her sunny face. If they missed her in the school-room, they were all the more conscious of her absence when recess came, for Randa was leader in all their romps and games. Half their enjoyment was gone because she was not there.

As Randa was not present in the afternoon, another mark was put against her name, and Miss Hyssop improved the opportunity to deliver a brief lecture on the duty of constant attendance.

"It is Miranda's duty to attend school. She has neglected her duty and that is wrong. The Bible teaches us that we must do our duty always. I am sorry to be obliged to make the black marks, but it is my duty."

The vacant seat, the absence of the sunny face, the silence when it came Randa's turn to recite, made it a dismal afternoon. When school was out, Bell and Linda went to see what had happened, and found Randa at home with a bright flush on her face and not very well.

"Did Miss Hyssop set down any black marks against me?"

"Yes, and I hate her. She'd no business to," Bell replied, eager to make it easier for Randa by expressing her dislike to Miss Hyssop.

"Yes, she had, for I wasn't there."

Bell and Linda did what they could to comfort her, but Randa could not forget that the marks were against her.

She was no better when Bell and Linda called for her in the morning. The flush was deepening on her cheeks and her face and hands were very hot. Dr. Mayweed had

been in to see her, and she was taking medicine that left a bad taste in her mouth. Her lips were dry and her tongue parched, and she was burning up with thirst.

With sad hearts Linda and Bell left Randa in her chamber and went to school, and it was a sorrowful group that gathered around them. Although the sun was shining brightly and the birds blithely singing, they had no heart for play. How could there be any pleasure in play, when Randa, who always led them, was suffering so much?

Miss Hyssop rubbed out the marks, but all the school wished she had not made them. If they had poor lessons it was because Randa was sick. They could only think of her, and wish they could do something for her. Bell, to show how much she loved her, carried up all her dolls. Linda brought a beautiful bouquet, while Caleb gathered the ripest strawberries in his father's field.

The days passed on, gloomy days they were, with no Randa in the school-room.

Dr. Mayweed was sitting in her chamber, watching her breathing and counting the quick beating of her pulse. There were wrinkles in his brows, such as always came when things were not as he wanted them to be.

"If I could only get it out," said the Doctor, with the wrinkles growing deeper. And because he was not able to get "it" out, the sweet young life was burning up. He said it that the father and mother might understand that perhaps Randa was going away from them. They had feared it from the first, and had prayed the Lord to spare her, if it was best for them and best for the child.

The neighbors came to care for her, to fan cooling breezes upon her cheeks, to give her a drink of water, wishing that it might be to her the water of life, — hoping against hope as they saw her wasting away.

And Randa, the while, was sorry she was not at school, and tried to make an excuse to Miss Hyssop,—tried to tell her why she failed in her lesson, why she whispered to White Hair and laughed with Linda.

"Please don't put the black mark against me."

It was the language of a wandering mind.

"There are no black marks against you, my dear child; you are not at school, but here at home with me," said her mother.

"At home! Ain't I at school?"

"No, my darling," and the mother laid her hand upon the troubled brow.

"But the black marks are against me."

"Miss Hyssop will rub them all out, darling."

"She can't rub 'em out, for there is a great book that God has got and they are down in that."

So the tender conscience transferred the little misdeeds of the school-room to Heaven's bar of justice. If she had done wrong here, it must be wrong there.

"But Our Father will rub them all out for his dear Son's sake," said the mother.

"If I am sorry for 'em, do you think he will?"

"Yes, my child. He has promised to, and God never fails to keep his promise."

Her eyes are fixed in earnest gaze upon the mother's face. She cannot doubt her word, and the troubled soul, weary with carrying its burden, so little and yet so great, lays it down confidingly at the Saviour's feet.

Deeper now the wrinkles in Doctor Mayweed's brow, deeper the lines of care on the mother's face, deeper the gloom in the father's heart. The sun is going down. The sights and sounds of day are dying.

In the hush and stillness of Randa's chamber, the father,

the mother, the doctor, the friends who stand there, can hear the mill-wheel slowly turning in the stream, for the miller is grinding a grist. They hear a heavily-laden team rolling slowly over the bridge, — the tramp of the horses' feet, the rumbling of the wheels, — and they think of the waters beneath sweeping on to the fathomless sea, and then their thoughts are of the sweet child who is going down into the dark and silent river of death. Above them, high up in the sky, they hear the night hawks sadly calling to their mates. The shadows are deepening in the valley, but golden the light of the sun upon the distant mountains. They who have watched the fading life till their hearts are wrung with grief and who turn away to gaze upon the glory, see a handful of white cloud sail away and vanish, as it were, into heaven. So will the dear one go, — white, beautiful and pure.

Faint and feeble now her breathing. Slower turns the mill-wheel, for the grinding is almost done. The shadows are creeping up the valley and the glory fading from the mountains. The team is all but over the bridge. And now the hawks have ceased their calling.

"Randa, darling!"

"Mother."

Nothing more.

The wheel is still, the grinding ended, the team across the bridge and Randa beyond the river.

The Sabbath comes, the day of peace and rest.

Out from the chamber they bear her, young men carrying the bier, out into the summer air, with lilies on her bosom and a white rose in her hand.

"*Gone!*" It is the bell! With trembling lips it speaks, tolling the knell and not the passing hour. With slow and

faltering steps, walking blindly by the bier, the stricken parents hear the mournful peal.

"*Gone!*" Like a leaden weight it falls upon the father's heart. No more will he enfold her in his arms, or know her sweet caressing, or feel her soft lips pressing on his cheek. At mid-day it is night. Trying with all the strength of manhood not to shed a tear, he walks, as in a dream.

"*Gone!*" On him, with streaming eyes, the mother leans. In prayer her lips are moving, "God give me strength to bear it! How can I give her up?

"*Gone!* Her pure young life beguiled the hours. Oh, weary days! Oh, lonely nights! Gone all the happiness of care! all life's sweet pleasures ended! Henceforth her steps I shall not hear. Nor will there be an answer to my calling. But I shall meet her yet again, — not here, but there!"

"*Gone!*" Hand in hand, Bell and Linda, Daisy and Mary, and after them Caleb and Moses, Job and Ben, and all the school, slowly along the pathway moving. With swelling hearts they bear her through the church-yard gates.

"*Gone!*" Leaning on his spade the gray-haired sexton waits. He lifts the coffin-lid; they see her smiling face, and on her brow the light of Heaven! So will she look forevermore.

"*Gone!*" It is over. They drop their flowers in the grave and move away, the bell above them tolling. So they lay her down to sleep, and yet they do not think of her as being there, but as having gone where every thing is bright and beautiful and pure.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SPELLING-MATCH.

WHITE HAIR and his mates were getting on in life. Other teachers had succeeded Miss Hyssop, young ladies from the academy and young gentlemen from college. Caleb was large enough to lay aside his jacket and wear a coat. He wondered if Linda would notice how nicely his hair was parted, or if she would observe the knot of his necktie. Now and then he took his father's shaving apparatus to his chamber on the sly, shaved off the down upon his cheeks, and felt, when the operation was finished, that he was more than ever a man. He could but notice, too, that Linda and Bell, Daisy and Mary, and their companions, were growing taller; that they were taking the tucks out of their skirts. They no longer played the romp in going to or returning from school, but walked arm-in-arm beneath the elms, whispering secrets in each other's ears. How sweet the music of their voices, the merry laughter that floated into the school-room, when they were at recess! How it would have thrilled Caleb if he had known the prizes they were winning in the contest for sweethearts. That Bell could run faster and jump farther than any of her mates for Moses, that Linda could beat them all when White Hair was the prize, that Daisy could outstrip them in the race

for Ben, and Mary for Job, was a delightful but inexplicable mystery. Caleb wondered, when they came back to their studies, what they had been doing to give such freshness to their cheeks, such brightness to their laughing eyes, not knowing that they had been breathing a perfume that has lost none of its fragrance through all the years that have rolled away since Adam and Eve walked side by side through the shady groves of Eden.

Mr. Kirk was now their teacher, and one of the means employed by him to stimulate them to intellectual effort was a spelling-match and an exhibition of their oratorical ability.

There was great preparation. Caleb sat up late at night studying the dictionary. He no longer stood at the foot of the class, but had moved up the line. All Millbrook would be present to see how well he could acquit himself, and he would do his best.

The evening came, and with it their parents to the school-house, to witness the contest. The throbbing of their hearts was like the drum-beat before a battle.

Linda and Moses were to be the leaders. Linda selected Job as her first lieutenant. Moses surprised everybody by choosing Bell. There were many of her mates who were her superiors in spelling, but Moses had caught the bright gleam of her witching eyes and had chosen her when his judgment prompted him to select Mary Fielding.

Caleb wanted Linda to win, and he wished to be on her side, but knew he was a blunderer and might do her more harm than good. He would like to fight for her, but would he not help her more by being in the camp of the enemy? He rejoiced when Linda made Mary her second choice. Moses selected Ben. Linda then looked around the room and did not seem to see Caleb, her next choice falling on

Daisy. Caleb respected her judgment, but grew red in the face when he reflected that everybody could see how low he stood in the estimation of those who knew him best. It is the consciousness that we are receiving our just deserts that sometimes cuts us to the heart. Linda was unwittingly assigning him his proper place. Others still were selected and his name was not called.

"Caleb Krinkle." Linda had chosen him last of all to do what he could for her.

The ranks were complete and the contest began. Mr. Kirk requested Mr. Makepeace, the lawyer, to direct the spelling, that everybody might know there was no possible collusion between himself and either party, but that it was to be a royal battle and that the victory would belong to those who won it.

There was a quick thinning out of the ranks. One by one they went down, a half-dozen on Moses' side, as many more on Linda's, and Caleb was not among them. His blood was up. The will, for the moment, was master of the brain. Bright were the eyes that beamed upon him from the right flank of the army. He had won the respect of his commander-in-chief, and that is every thing to the private soldier. There was that in Linda's manner which said to him, "Pardon me for choosing you last; I thank you for what you have already done." That paid him, and the very rising of the tide of good-will among the lookers-on stimulated him.

Ben was down on Moses' side, but Caleb still maintained his place. The hours spent at night poring over the hard words in the dictionary had not been in vain. Daisy disappeared from Linda's ranks, and then Bell was suddenly discomfited on Moses' side. It was a sad blow to her; the smiles fled from her sunny face and the bright flush

faded from her cheeks. Moses had selected her to fill the place of honor, but now he looked down upon her with flashing eyes and a contemptuous curl of the lip.

Down at last. Caleb said "ei" when it should have been "ie." It might have comforted him a little if he had known how many of us have found that same dipthong to be in reality a thong, tripping us when we least expected it. But he had fought a good fight. He had done what he could, had done it well, and the bright eyes thanked him even after his downfall. Though he was counted out, there was a buzz of appreciation from the audience. No matter who might win in the end, he had achieved a triumph to be proud of. Moses stood alone upon the other side. Linda and her first lieutenant, Job, were all that remained of her noble army.

And now it was a contest between Job and Moses, for Linda had missed and had taken her seat, — rejoicing that Job was still left to win the victory. Job not only had large hands, thick lips and big ears, but he was laughed at for his uncouth manners and eccentric ways. Who but Job would spend the entire nooning making triangles on the blackboard, forgetting to eat his dinner? Moses had nicknamed him the "Old Scrub."

The lookers-on were now taking sides, one party hoping that Moses, who had such a fair face and ruddy countenance, would win the day; the other party feeling sure that the ungainly but quiet and self-possessed fellow who seemed so unconscious of all that was taking place, would come off victorious.

All things must have an end. Moses hesitated, fingered the buttons upon his vest, gazed around the room, as if looking for some one to help him, missed, and took his seat. Job spelled the word and stood victor of the hard-fought field.

Caleb clapped his hands, and all of the little boys followed his example, and so contagious was their enthusiasm that the audience joined in and gave Job a grand ovation.

After the spelling came the declamations by Ben, Moses and Job, with Caleb last. Caleb had rehearsed his piece at home to the cattle, horses, and fowls in the barn, and the hens had cackled their admiration of his eloquence when he shouted "Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, I give my heart and hand to this measure." He knew every word, and could rattle it off as glibly as the "High diddle diddle" of Mother Goose.

Caleb was stout in his legs, was a match for Moses, or Job, or anybody else of his age, in running and jumping, but there came a sudden weakness in his knees while bowing to the great crowd of which he was the centre. His lips were parched, his throat dry, his brain in a whirl. He could think of "The boy stood on the burning deck," and "You'd scarce expect one of my age," but not a word of the beginning of "Sink or swim." The room was going round as if the building and everybody in it, except himself, were moving in a circle. He put his hands into his pockets, took them out again, and fingered the buttons of his vest. He was as speechless as a statue. He heard a titter and knew that it came from Moses, and that it would in an instant run round the room like a train of powder. The blood rushed from his heart in a hot wave to his face. He looked around to discern one sympathetic face, and saw it, — Linda's. It was a look that said, "I would help you if I could."

Ah! the sympathy of woman! It has saved many a soul from despair; made heroes out of cowards. There was one who would not laugh at him; for her sake if for nothing else he would not fail.

"*I will!*" The "I wills" have done great things in the world. They have turned the tide when the day was lost and brought victory out of defeat. The thumping that had been going on beneath Caleb's vest suddenly ceased; the room and everybody in it became stationary. The words came to him, and calmly, distinctly, forcibly, he uttered them. Loud and long the cheers when he stepped from the stage.

"Well done," said Mr. Makepiece, speaking for all. It was like the drinking of wine, — that first taste of public applause.

The contest was over, and the people were on their way to their homes, but Caleb and his mates still lingered in the school-room. An eventful hour had come. They had discussed its coming, and had mutually agreed to acquit themselves like men.

Caleb had thought, during the day, of what he should say to Linda. Of course it was to be Linda. Choices had come of their own accord under the law of natural selection, and it was to be Moses and Bell, Job and Mary, Ben and Daisy. Would it be genteel for him to say, "Miss Fair, shall I see you home?" That would be prosaic, but it was brief and to the point. Would it not sound better to say, "Shall I have the honor of escorting you to your father's residence?" But that was rather stately. Caleb concluded to say that which should appear to be most appropriate when the time arrived.

The young gentlemen went out and stood by the door, walking here and there, pulling nervously at their mittens, casting eager glances now and then to the lingering group of young ladies within the school-room. They could see by the light of the one solitary candle that Mr. Kirk was setting things to rights on his desk; that Linda, Bell,

Daisy, Mary and their mates were putting on their bonnets and shawls. It took them a great while to do it. They could hear mysterious whispers and smothered laughs. Each moment seemed an age to Ben. Though the evening air was mild, he felt the cold chills creeping down his back.

"How cold it is!" he said.

"I think it is rather warm," Caleb replied.

"I don't believe they want us to go with them," whispered Ben confidentially to Caleb.

Job stood unconcernedly looking up to the moon, as if he were calculating its distance from the earth, instead of patiently waiting for the appearance of Mary. Moses stood aloof, kicking his heels into the ground as if grinding something beneath them.

"Moses don't like to think that he is defeated and he is mad because you led off in the applause," said Ben.

Caleb made no reply; he was listening to hear what was going on within.

"You go first," said one.

"No, you."

There was a consultation, a close grouping of heads. The young ladies were in a delightful yet trembling state of expectancy. They knew that as the wolf walked by the side of Little Red Riding Hood, ready to eat her up, so there was a pack of wolves waiting for them by the door. Strange the mystery of love's sweet dawn! they would be disappointed if the young wolves were to run away and leave them to go home alone.

Mr. Kirk had put on his coat and was ready to close the house. The young ladies came, — not one by one, but together. They crossed the threshold. Caleb began to think over what he should say to Linda, and while thinking, heard Moses say, "Shall I see you home, Linda?"

She placed her arm in his and they walked away.

He saw Job sidle awkwardly toward Mary, and Ben make a bow to Daisy.

A half dozen other boys offered their arms to as many girls, and were accepted. Himself and Bell were left alone, and she was walking slowly along, as if waiting for him. Then Mr. Kirk stepped quickly forward, and Caleb heard him say, "Shall I be your escort, Bell?"

They were gone. Caleb stood alone, trying to recall his scattered senses. The eventful hour had come; it had been compressed into a single moment. The blissful dream was over. He could hear the retreating footsteps of his mates growing fainter in the distance; their voices died upon the air. He leaned against the school-house and meditated upon the situation. He was a fool. Ecstatic bliss had been within his reach; he could have had it by asking, but he had foolishly allowed Moses to snatch it from his hands.

Moses knew that he intended to go with Linda, and it was therefore a premeditated insult. Why did he not go with Bell, as he had intended? Was it because Bell disappointed him in the spelling-match? Did Moses escort Linda after his defeat, to let her know that he was a gentleman? was it not rather to be avenged for the applause which had been given over his defeat? He recollected what Ben had whispered, — "He's mad because you led off in the applause."

But why had the teacher been in such eager haste to pick up Bell? What right had he to step down from his high position? It was small business for Mr. Kirk. And Linda ought to have known better than to have gone with Moses. She might have understood that Moses did not care two straws for her.

Passion was in and reason was out. Reason called to him, "You might have had her if you had not been a coward."

He was in no mood to listen to such an upbraiding. There are not many of us who can bear to hear the truths which reason utters sometimes in our hours of disappointment.

He thought of Milton's angels, who supposed that they were sure of heaven, and suddenly found themselves falling into outer darkness, — only there was this difference: they were a legion, and could join hands in their hatred, while he was alone.

Caleb waited by the school-house, listening for the sound of approaching footsteps. He heard them. Moses was returning, flushed with his successful exploit in cutting out Caleb, and proud of having gone home with Linda. He had rendered her a delicate attention, seeing that he had been defeated under her generalship. But the applause over his defeat was ringing in his ears, and he made up his mind that Caleb should smart for what he had done in starting it, not reflecting that it was a compliment to Job.

They met face to face beneath the elms.

"Get out of my way," said Moses.

"Perhaps you own the whole sidewalk."

"Brave fellow! Hadn't pluck enough to go home with a girl!"

"What do you mean by that, sir?"

"Get out of my way. I can't stop to talk with a puppy," said Moses, giving Caleb a push.

Caleb gave him a blow in the face, and received one in return. Cuffs, blows and kicks followed in rapid succession. Neither cared to strike at arm's length, and each was ready to come to close quarters, to take quick revenge. A moment's breathing and they grappled. After a few trials of strength

they fell upon the ground, rolling over and over, each gaining, then losing, an advantage. Caleb had one hand upon Moses' nose and he felt the warm blood trickling through his fingers. It startled him, and he was ready to relax his hold, but his own scalp was being lifted from his head, and it was no time to be merciful. The strife went on, each exerting his utmost strength. Like demons, they glared in each other's faces, but with a sudden and desperate effort Caleb had his adversary in his power. He planted his knees upon the breast of his foe, resting a moment before giving the blows that would make it a lasting victory.

"Let me up," said Moses, with a husky voice.

"Not till I have taken my pay." He would take all that was due him and a good deal more. He would have interest for all the insults, slights and sneers he had received from Moses. He would take such pay that from that time onward and forever he would be his master.

He raised his arm to bring down his clenched fist like a hammer upon Moses' face. He would blacken his eyes, pound his cheeks to a jelly, and knock his teeth down his throat.

"*Gone!*"

It was the first stroke of the bell tolling the hour, and as it fell upon the air, memory went back over the intervening years to that mournful day, when, with flowers in one hand and Moses clasping the other, they walked together with tearful eyes and swelling hearts after the bier that was bearing Randa to her grave. It was as if she had called to him from heaven. The raised arm dropped. Caleb relaxed his hold, rose, and walked away. He reached his home, washed the blood from his face and hands, and crept stealthily up stairs and into bed. Sometimes at night, when he was not too sleepy or tired, he had repeated the prayer taught him

by his mother in childhood, but now he was in no mood to say it, and was half provoked with himself for being so chicken-hearted when he had Moses in his power. His face was swollen and his head was aching from the blows that he had received. Gradually there came on a heart-ache, harder to be borne. As if to reproach him with her calm and peaceful light, the moon looked in upon him. The winds were sweeping through the valley, rustling the fallen leaves. Like them, his happiness and peace of mind had faded and fallen. Revenge was not so sweet as he thought it would be, and the victory of blood was not so grand as he had pictured it. What would Linda think of him? How could he meet her on the morrow? How could he ever again look with steady gaze into her deep, earnest, truthful eyes?

The shadows lurking in the room became accusing spirits. He could hear a wailing among the pines in the pasture, as if a company of angels had gathered there to weep over his sin and shame. At times, when the breezes died away, he could hear the water murmuring by the mill, so peacefully, that it reminded him of the beatitude of the gospel, "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God."

But his heart was still hot, and the devil within him changed the angelic whispers into the sneer and titter that came from Moses' lips, and the choir went back into heaven, and left him to himself, to toss and tumble, to his headache and heart-ache, to the smell of blood, to the turmoil of anger and hatred, and a hunger for revenge.

CHAPTER X.

THE LADY IN BLACK.

THERE came a passenger in the stage one day to Millbrook: a lady dressed in mourning, with a thick veil over her face. Whether she was young or in the middle of life her fellow-passengers could not say, for she remained closely veiled. She held no communication with any one in the coach, but was as silent as a nun. That she had a sweet voice every one could testify, for they heard her say to the landlord of the "Flying Eagle," "I will take a room, if you please."

The lady did not sit down with the other passengers to dinner, but informed the landlord that she would rest awhile and then take a lunch in her own room.

The servant-girl who carried up the lunch got a sight of her face and informed the clerk that she was very beautiful, and that she could not be more than thirty-five years old. She had brown hair, arching eyebrows, blue eyes, very white teeth, and was pale as if she had been watching by a sick-bed.

The lady sat in her chamber at a table in the centre of the room eating her dinner, and while sitting there could look out of the front window and see the sun shining upon Mr. Meek's sign. She could look into the store through the open door, and see the clerks behind the counter, the customers in front

of it, and Mr. Meek himself sitting in the counting-room with his account-books before him.

The lady, having finished her lunch, went down from her room, with her veil over her face, as when she arrived, walked across the street and entered the store.

"Good-afternoon, madam," said the head clerk, Mr. Sharp. "What shall we show you to-day?" He bowed very low before her, for she was a stranger and a lady. He could see that by her deportment.

"If Mr. Meek is disengaged, will you please say to him that I would like to see him a moment?"

The clerk bowed again, stepped into the counting-room and spoke to Mr. Meek, who rose from his arm-chair, came to the door, bowed politely, as he always did, and said, "Please step this way, madam."

He bowed again as she entered the room, bowed once more as he placed a chair for her, and as she wanted to see him on private business, — money matters, he concluded, or something for him to look after at Boston, — closed the door, and bowed again as he resumed his seat.

"What is your pleasure, madam?" he asked, rubbing his hands. The lady lifted her veil and looked him in the eye.

The color left his cheeks.

"Winifred!" he exclaimed.

"I hope you are well, Mr. Meek." It was a sweet, sad voice.

"What — what are you here for?" he asked, stammering.

"I was travelling this way and thought I would stop and see you," said the lady.

Her eyes were fastened on him, — searching eyes they were.

"It is a long while since we met; you did not expect to see me," she said.

"No, I did not," he replied.

She saw that he was observant of her dress, and waited for him to speak.

"You are in mourning for some one."

"Yes: do you wish to know for whom?"

There was a nervous movement of the muscles of his face, noticeable at times when he was excited.

"Is your child dead?"

"*Our* child is dead," was the reply. Her lips quivered, but the words were spoken firmly, as if she had schooled herself for the interview.

"What was the child to me?" he asked.

"I know," she replied, "that she was nothing to *you*,— you who promised to be my husband, whom I trusted and loved better than my own life."

Each word was a sting. Mr. Meek turned uneasily in his chair.

"And now you have come to dog my steps?" he said.

"You have jumped at a conclusion, Mr. Meek; you mistake me. I have not come here for any such purpose."

He started at the words.

"Do you think," she continued, "that I have been quiet through all these years to lift my hand against you now? I have loved you too well for that. I was a poor girl, but you said that you loved me. I believed you, plighted my troth to you, and you gave me yours. I gave up honor, self-respect, every thing, for you. I filled my life with sorrow and shame for you. I was turned away from my father's door because of my love for you. Through all the years that have passed I have loved you, and do you think I would harm you *now?*"

Mr. Meek leaned his head upon his hand, but made no reply.

"No, Mr. Meek, I have not come here to cross your path.

I have no friend in the world, not one. After I had shut myself out of my father's house and out of all other homes, you turned away from me, and there was no one to whom I could go. I could have had friends, — those who would have made believe they were friends, — who would have dressed me in silks and satins, given me a richly-furnished chamber, and kept a carriage for me. Men have bowed down before me, rich men, honorable men, as the world counts them, men with wives and children, but when I plighted my love to you it was forever, and I have kept my promise."

Mr. Meek groaned in spirit. This was the faithful heart that he had outraged; this the true love he had thrown away for the sake of obtaining money, and had been cheated out of it. The woman before him was in the prime of life, and though there were lines of sorrow on her cheek, there because he had done her such a grievous wrong, still she was queenly in her beauty. How different from Mrs. Meek, who was old, gray-haired and wrinkled! He cursed his folly, — not his wickedness, only his folly and imbecility. He rose from his chair, stalked across the room with clasped hands, inwardly cursing himself.

"O Winifred!" he said, stopping before her, "I was an idiot. I haven't seen a single hour of happiness since I turned away from you. It was cruel in me, but if you have suffered, so have I. My house has been a hell. But if you have loved me, I have not forgotten you through all these years, and to see you now, to look into your face, to hear your voice, brings back all the bliss of those by-gone days. Fool, fool that I was!"

Dead to all moral perceptions, Mr. Meek set his wrongs against those he had committed against this woman, and asked her to pity him.

Inexplicable the mystery of woman's love, that suffers and

endures alike in sin and in purity, in shame and in honor. Notwithstanding all that this woman had suffered at the hands of Mr. Meek, her love still went out to him. He was a married man; she had no moral or legal right to come to him, but love and passion were stronger than reason and conscience. When he said that through all the years his home had been a hell, she forgot her resentment of the past, forgot her wrongs, and pitied him.

Mr. Meek walked the floor, meditating. He took down his coat from the peg on which it hung, pulled out the peg, and peeped through the hole to see whether his clerks were manifesting any curiosity to know what the conversation might be about, but the clerks were minding their own business. He came and took her by the hand, as he often had done in former days.

"Forgive me, Winifred. I was a villain, a fool. Go to the hotel now, but take the stage to-morrow for Boston. I will go with you," he said.

There was a bright gleam in her eye as she dropped the heavy crape veil over her face. Mr. Meek opened the door, bowed to her politely as she passed out, and said, loud enough for all the clerks and customers to hear, —

"I shall go to Boston to-morrow, madam, and it will give me pleasure to attend to your affairs."

It was only a little handful of dust thrown in the eyes of his clerks.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WAYLAND FAMILY.

Wayland. It was the name engraved upon a silver door-plate on Beacon street, in Boston. The milkman going his rounds in the morning was sure of seeing a white-haired old negro rubbing it with chalk and wash-leather. Passers-by, looking in through the open door, saw a wide hall and stairway, a library on one side, and parlor and sitting-room connected on the other. The rich damask curtains around the windows were gathered in graceful folds. There were costly carpets on the floors, paintings and engravings on the walls, statuettes on the mantels. Adjoining the mansion was a coach-house and a stable.

The library was a cheerful room. The first rays of the sun in the morning illumined the volumes in russet and gold upon the shelves.

Mr. Wayland was a lover of books, and having ample means, lived a life of comparative ease, finding his enjoyment in study, and in caring for his only daughter, Bertha. He was well along in life, — had lived a bachelor many years, had found at last a loving wife, who for a few months filled his house with brightness and then passed out of the world when Bertha came into it. After the

death of his wife the gray hairs came thick and fast; the wrinkles deepened; the things that had charmed him lost their power to charm; hopes that had animated him no longer urged him on to make new ventures with his ships upon the sea or his merchandise upon the land. His great care was for Bertha, who was the image of her mother. She was his chief joy. In the morning, when he heard her footsteps descending the stairs, he laid down his paper and stood with outspread arms to clasp her to his heart.

When the morning kiss had been exchanged, father and daughter, hand in hand, went through the long hall to the breakfast-room, where they were sure to find Aunt Janet seated at the table, with the silver coffee-urn and the white porcelain cups on a waiter before her, and Peter, the white-haired negro, standing with his hand on Mr. Wayland's chair, ready to serve them.

Aunt Janet Porgie was Mr. Wayland's aunt on the Porgie side. She had taken charge of Bertha from her birth, and looked after her nephew's household affairs, keeping a vigilant eye upon the linen in the presses, the silver on the sideboard, and the servants in the kitchen, and upon a number of widows and maiden ladies who were accustomed to call quite often at the Wayland mansion. In her opinion they needed looking after quite as much as the servants, for if a second Mrs. Wayland should happen to come into the establishment she would be under the necessity of moving out of it and resigning her charge of Bertha. She had mapped out a brilliant future for her ward, and was determined so to manage things that Bertha should be the one star brighter than all others in society.

The Porgie family could trace its pedigree back to Sir Philip Porgie, who was made Sir Philip for something or

other when the Normans were putting England beneath their feet. Succeeding generations had given additional lustre to the name.

Alliance with worthy names of the past was something to be proud of, in Aunt Janet's estimation. The Porgie coat of arms, with a unicorn rampant and a lion couchant, in a gilt frame, adorned the walls of Aunt Janet's chamber; the Porgie branch of the genealogical tree running down through twig, branch, limb and trunk to the tap root, old Sir Philip.

Having an exalted opinion of the Porgie family, it is not to be wondered at that Aunt Janet presided with dignity at the coffee-urn, and also in the parlor when entertaining visitors. She was tall, robust and queenly in her appearance, with gray hair, a florid countenance, and brightly flashing eyes. Her voice was musical, her words were clearly enunciated, and her sentences well chosen.

She had found time to acquire the French, German and Italian languages, and her range of reading had been sufficiently wide to enable her to converse sensibly and intelligently with those who had attained eminence in literature, science and art. It was her delight to entertain visitors and be entertained by them; and there was always a spare seat at the table for a professor, a doctor, an artist, an author, or any distinguished somebody, who had made his mark and was worthy of being patronized. No reception or party at the West End was complete if Miss Porgie was absent. Her presence gave dignity and grace to every entertainment.

The servants in the Wayland establishment felt that they were serving a queen, and looked down contemptuously from the back door upon their fellow-servants in the neighboring kitchens. The portly coachman, sitting erect

upon his seat, wearing his drab overcoat with its three capes, his cockade and gauntlets, and driving a superb span of horses, had only patronizing nods for his most intimate fellow-coachman when carrying Aunt Janet through Beacon street out to Longwood and Brookline, and homeward by the colleges in Cambridge.

Peter, the white haired negro, was an important personage in the Wayland mansion, at least in his own estimation. He was courtly and dignified in his bearing. To his own sense of what was right and proper he added the Porgie dignity. He profoundly believed that there was not in all Boston a lady superior to Aunt Janet, or a gentleman so learned as Mr. Wayland, or a miss the equal of Bertha. Peter's advantages for obtaining an education had been exceedingly limited, but it was a pleasure to him to look upon the books in the library; to see the morning sunlight illuminating the rich bindings; to take down the volumes and pore over the contents. By moving his finger along the lines, by spelling the long words, he could make his way slowly down the page of the dictionary, which was his favorite volume. The longest and hardest words had a charm for him, and there was a pleasure in being able to give his admiring acquaintances the benefit of the knowledge obtained by a perusal of its contents. If he sometimes used a long word where a short one would quite as well express his meaning, or if he now and then gave utterance to a word not to be found in any lexicon, it was to let them know that life within the Wayland mansion was on a higher plane than that occupied by ordinary individuals.

Of all the gentlemen of color attending church, there was not one who walked up the aisle with greater dignity than Peter. If one of his fellow-servants, before

or after service, insinuated that he was putting on too many airs, there was quick resentment, for not only his own dignity but the Wayland honor was to be defended.

"None of your insinuendoes, sah, if you please; and allow me to say that you would be putrified with amazement, sah, if you were to see de way we do things at our house, sah."

Peter's dignified bearing always gave emphasis to his words.

Aunt Janet had so many calls to make during the day, so many lectures, concerts and parties to attend during the evenings, so many spinsters and widows to keep her eyes on, that Bertha's education was intrusted to a governess. But the time had come when she must have instruction in advance of that given by a governess. Mr. Wayland introduced the subject at the breakfast-table. Bertha had eaten her breakfast and was out upon the Common feeding the sparrows.

"What shall we do with her?" Mr. Wayland asked.

"I have been thinking the matter over, and have come to the conclusion that Miss Posey's school in New York will be just the place for her to obtain a finished education," said Aunt Janet.

"What are the advantages of that institution?"

"It is very genteel and select."

Aunt Janet did not think it wise to say that it was a fashionable school, knowing that Mr. Wayland was disposed to turn up his nose at fashion.

"What is the course of instruction?" he asked.

"I have Miss Posey's catalogue here," said Aunt Janet, proceeding to read the names of the professors and teachers and the branches taught by them, — of language, Latin, Greek, German, French, Spanish and Italian; of

philosophy, mental and moral ; of science, chemistry, geology, astronomy, botany, metaphysics ; of accomplishments, instruction on the piano, guitar, harp, vocal music, painting in oil and water colors, drawing, needlework, dancing, and the art of being polite.

"Is that all?" Mr. Wayland asked, when Aunt Janet had gone over the long array of names, of the teachers employed and text-books used.

"I should think that was sufficient," she replied, piqued at the question.

"Pardon me, aunty ; I did not intend any thing derogatory ; it only occurred to me that mathematics, geography, grammar, reading, writing, history, — the fundamentals, as we used to call them, — were left out."

"Oh, they are taught, of course!" said Aunt Janet, with a little impatience.

"I suppose I am rather stupid, but you see it was a natural inquiry, considering that I have considerable to do with accounts at the store."

"Don't you think, my dear nephew, that it is a splendid array of names?"

"Certainly ; but rather too splendid, according to my notions." Mr. Wayland stopped to drink his coffee.

"I don't understand you," said Aunt Janet.

"Well, aunty, now that the question must be settled as to what we shall do with Bertha, let us look it in the face. There are private schools in this city and in New York, which, I dare say, are very good, but I don't think Miss Posey's is the place for her."

"Why not, please?"

"Miss Posey, I notice," he replied, after looking at the catalogue, "does not give a course of study, but as young ladies are usually in society when they are eighteen or

thereabouts, it is evident that she does not expect them to stay with her more than two, or at the most, three years. Now she would have us understand that she can take a girl who has gone through division, and who, possibly, may know the nine parts of speech, and in that time carry her through a curriculum which embraces not only what every well-informed person must have, a good English education, but a knowledge of the ancient and modern languages, nearly all the sciences, and the accomplishments besides. And the worst of it is, more time is given to the accomplishments than to any thing else. Miss Posey ought to add several other branches to make her course of study complete."

"What others, please?"

"Hebrew, Sanscrit, Chinese and Choctaw, differential calculus and political economy."

"Now, John Wayland, just stop being ironical. Miss Posey keeps a school where any young lady who is destined to shine in society can get a finished education."

"Too much finish. It is veneering, varnish, polish and shine."

In his long business career Mr. Wayland had come to estimate things at their value, and was generally sharp and curt in his discussions.

"Hadn't you better put Bertha into the public schools, where there isn't any polish?"

"I'm not sure but it would be well."

It was a provoking reply.

"And let her mix with the rag-a-muffins?"

"Oh, so far as mixing with the rag-a-muffins, as you call them, is concerned, I shouldn't mind it! I don't think that they would harm Bertha."

"What! have her shut up all day with those horrid

creatures that sleep in cellars and garrets, and go in rags, and don't have their hair combed from January to December! John Wayland, are you crazy?"

Mr. Wayland leaned back in his chair, and indulged in a hearty laugh at the energy with which the words were spoken.

"It is no laughing matter," said Aunt Janet, discomposed at the moment. "I am sure I have had the good of Bertha at heart."

"That's so, aunty. I know you have. I beg pardon for laughing, but, really, I couldn't help it. You know that I like to see you stirred up once in a while; it is as good as a play. But now about Bertha. Even if she were to mix with children who sleep in cellars and garrets, and who are not so clean as they might be, I don't think that any moral contamination would come to her. Bertha is a positive character. She has her own ways of doing things. She has a sweet disposition, and is so pure that evil would roll off from her as the rain-drops roll from the corn-leaves. But I have no intention of sending her to one of the public schools, where every thing goes by rule, and where the teachers are trying to get on themselves by pushing on their pupils. I don't care to have Bertha come home at night with an aching head, with a satchel full of books, and ten pages of one thing, fifteen of another and twenty of a third to memorise before morning. In Miss Posey's school it is varnish and polish; in the public schools it is push and cram. Cram is all very well for an editor, who wants an article that will be run over at breakfast and used for kindling the fire the next morning, but the foundation for a thorough education can't be laid on cram, any more than the foundations of houses can be laid on soft mud. I don't want Bertha's mind to become like a sponge, tak-

ing itself full of water one minute and having it squeezed out the next, to remain as dry as at the beginning, but that is the natural sequence of cram. I don't want to see her flat on her back with a crooked spine, or if not that, turning and tumbling through sleepless nights, with nerves unstrung from over-pushing on the part of ambitious teachers."

"But what will you do with her?" asked Aunt Janet, who was glad to see that Mr. Wayland had no intention of having Bertha mix with the children of the public schools.

"I have about made up my mind to send her to the school where I fitted for college, — Hilltown Academy."

"Send her to that old-fashioned, out-of-the-way, countrified establishment? What are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking that she will get a solid education and will be taught to think."

"And have milkmaids who smell of the barn, and clod-hoppers who drive steers and shovel dirt, for her associates!"

"Dirt, you know, as the philosophers say, is only matter in the wrong place; and as to the greenhorns, who put it in the right place, some of them are pretty good fellows. Perhaps I never told you, aunty, that I shovelled muck in my boyhood, and held the plough, and swung the scythe. I have worn a blue smock frock, and been to bed many a night with blistered hands, and I never have been able to discern that any moral contamination came of it; and as to the milkmaids, my mother, you remember, belonged to that order in her girlhood. You will not think it strange if under the circumstances I do not have any great horror of milkmaids."

"Seriously now, John, you don't intend to send Bertha to that school?"

"I am sorry to differ with you, aunty, as to what is best for her, but, seriously, that is my intention."

"Well, John Wayland, I must say that I am surprised. Sister Ann Porgie is right, after all; she, and all my friends on the Porgie side, say that you are an odd stick."

"I expect it is so, though I never have been able to get at a satisfactory meaning of that term. I have come to the conclusion, however, that there are several classes of odd-sticks. A person who departs in any considerable degree from notions of what society thinks is proper, is an odd stick. The woman who goes into society with a dress that does not sweep the floor is looked upon by those who wear long trails as one of the odd sticks. The young lady who has the courage to appear in the fashionable world pretty much as the Lord made her, so far as humps and hollows are concerned, with no deceptive mechanism of springs and wires, is an odd stick. The girl who doesn't spend her time in flirting, and who, instead of dancing all night, goes to bed at a sensible hour, is an odd stick. I wish that there were more odd sticks in the world. There wouldn't be such a faded-out set of girls as we now have, with no vitality or energy. The Upper Crust, as we call ourselves, is getting rather thin. What is going to become of us a generation or two hence? Our girls have no more stamina than potato sprouts that grow in a cellar. Now I don't propose to have Bertha go to a school where she will have to dress in silk all the time. I want her to go where she can have a romp in the fields now and then, and where she will obtain the foundations for a strong and healthy womanhood."

"John, I think that you had better give up selling gunny bags and jute and take up preaching."

"And be the apostle of the odd sticks?" he replied, laughing.

"Well, Bertha, what do you say?" said Mr. Wayland, addressing Bertha, who came in at the moment. "Would you

rather go to Miss Posey's school in New York, where you can become a finished young lady in three years, and be as wise as Solomon with the smattering you will have of every thing under the sun, or would you rather go to the plain, old-fashioned, substantial school in the country where I fitted for college?"

"I want to go, father, where you think it best for me to go, but I think that I should like in the country better than at Miss Posey's."

"Why, my darling?"

"Because there would be flowers and sheep and cows and birds and trees and brooks in the country."

"You have left out clodhoppers," said Aunt Janet, with ill-concealed impatience at such a manifestation of depraved taste on the part of Bertha, but more particularly because she saw her own plans were to be upset.

"Well, my dear, I intend that your wish shall be gratified. I think it will be better in every respect that you should not be finished in three years at Miss Posey's."

"If she goes to that out-of-the-way place, she never will be finished."

"I agree with you, aunty; for the education which Bertha will obtain there, will, I trust, lead her to have some definite aim in life. People who have worthy objects in view never finish their education. So to the country we will go, darling," said Mr. Wayland, passing out.

"It is because he is a Wayland and an odd stick. A Porgie never would do it. What will folks say? Bertha won't appear decent in society," said Aunt Janet to herself, submitting to the inevitable, but resolving that when Bertha was through at Hilltown she should have at least one ter . at Miss Posey's.

CHAPTER XII.

JAKE NUBBIN'S PRESENT..

Rub and scrub.
Get all you can.
Save all you get.
Get all, save all, and you will have all.
Between saving a cent and spending a cent there is two cents difference.
Cents make dollars.
Money at interest grows at midnight.
Look out for Number One.
Number One is yourself.
Other folks are Number Two.

THESE were the ten commandments as taught by old Mr. Nubbin to his son Jacob, or Jake, as he was usually called. The instruction commenced when Jake was a very small boy. To save and to have, to get and to keep was the sole end of life. If this moral law was not rehearsed on Sunday, it was on all other days of the week through the year in Mr. Nubbin's house, which was out on the hills at the foot of the mountain. It was a hard farm, and there were so many rocks lying about that the people who owned the fertile meadows along the river were accustomed to say that Mr. Nubbin

made his pigs do his ploughing by sharpening their noses and dropping here and there a kernel of corn among the rocks. The pigs in attempting to get at the corn rooted up the ground and thus enabled him to put in a crop of corn and potatoes, which could not have been done with a plough. This was a joke which Jonathan Jolly started and which was intended to be a satire upon the breed of long-nosed swine kept by Mr. Nubbin.

Although there were no wide fields of arable land on his farm, Mr. Nubbin, by raking and scraping, by having no cats about him that did not catch mice, by bringing up his son not only to earn the salt in his porridge before he ate it, but to earn the porridge itself, had accumulated money in the savings bank and held notes payable on demand. All the interest that came from them went into new notes and new bonds and new mortgages. The bigger the snowball the more intent he was on rolling it. Jacob having early in life taken in the idea, lifted with all his might to make the ball bigger from year to year.

When Jake was old enough to do chores about the house and barn, he was put into the traces and kept at it. Even before he left off wearing his red woollen home-made frock, he was taught to drive the cows. When he was large enough to lift a rock as big as his double fist, Mr. Nubbin had him in the field. When he was a small boy he rode the horse to plough between the corn-rows, fed the pigs, tied up the cattle, cleared the stalls, spread the hay after the mowers in the summer mornings, and went ahead of them with his rake in the afternoons, and was frequently put up under the roof of the barn on the top of a great hot mow to stow away the hay. What he did would not have to be done by any one else. It was so many cents a day saved by Mr. Nubbin to add to the heap.

With all the chores Jake had on hand, he found very little time for study. In summer there was so much to be done that his father could not spare him. In the winter, after doing the chores, he went to school two miles distant, but having no liking for books, made no great progress.

So it came about that Jacob Nubbin, jr., arrived at manhood with very little knowledge derived from books.

From morning till night, summer and winter, spring and fall, without cessation Mr. Nubbin went on with his raking and scraping, teaching his son the same, and compelling his wife to follow suit. Mrs. Nubbin had raked so early in the morning and scraped so late at night, that there was not much left of her but skin and bones. It was not her nature to rub and scrub always. In the early years of her married life she had taken hold with a will to help her husband, looking forward to years of rest after getting something laid up for a rainy day. But like the rainbow when approached, the day of rest had moved farther and farther away.

"He that would thrive must rise at five." Mr. Nubbin believed in Poor Richard's maxims. They were his bible, only he improved his scripture by getting up at four and having Mrs. Nubbin and Jake and everybody else astir soon after.

"Nonsense!" was what he said if Mrs. Nubbin wanted to take just a little nap in the morning to rest her weary bones and aching head. The hired men, sleeping in the garret, were accustomed to hear him shouting at the foot of the stairs on Monday morning, —

"Come, boys, time to get up. It's Monday morning. To-morrow's Tuesday, next day's Wednesday, week half gone and nothing done yet. Stir yourselves!"

To make his calling effective, and to wake them from slumber, he was accustomed to give several vigorous blasts

on the tin trumpet and rap on the stairs with the broomstick.

But a sudden stop was put to all his raking and scraping; death stepped in, and Jake found himself at the age of twenty-three almost sole possessor of the estate. Mrs. Nubbin having her dower, Jake could not say that he possessed all; but his mother was so worn, there was so little flesh on her bones, her blood was so thin, that it would not be many years before he could call the whole his own. Now that he was in possession of the property, he went on with new zeal to add to the money in the bank, to the bonds and mortgages. The love of raking and scraping was ingrained into his nature. It was his happiness, his life, and the only drawback to his pleasure was the reflection that his mother might possibly, now that she could not rub and scrub as in former years, be a hindrance rather than a help.

But the rubbing and scrubbing must be done, and Jacob looked around to see who would be a good hand to do it. He had worked for Captain Krinkle, had watched Deborah tripping here and there about the house, saw how handy she was, how quickly she washed the dishes, scalded the milk-pans, and how pretty she looked when she was working over the butter, her plump arms bare to the elbow, and he had come to the conclusion that there was not her equal in Millbrook. She would be just the one to fetch and carry, and help him get and keep. With her to help he would make things hum. She was beautiful in his eyes. The more he thought of her rounded arms, of the strength there was in them, the more he admired them. She was so plump and hearty that she might rub and scrub forever and never get down to skin and bones.

He admired her for what there was in her, and went over her good points as he would those of a horse.

"She's sound," he said to himself. "She hasn't a hollow

tooth in her head. She ain't too fat nor too lean. She'll be up before the roosters crow in the morning, and keep on the go all day. She'll have to be up till eleven at night in summer to set the cheese. She'll be on the go eighteen hours out of the twenty-four. She won't spend much, — trust me for that. I shall have the purse strings in my hands. I'll let her put in, but I'll do the taking out."

Jacob loved Deborah not altogether because she could work, but her arms were plump and her cheeks rosy. He suspected that Jonathan Jolly had his eye on her. He resolved to secure her. He had no doubt that she would give Jonathan the mitten at once, and jump at the chance of getting him, as a pickerel jumps at a shiner. With his bonds, mortgages, and money in the bank, he would sail in and cut the craft out from under Jonathan's nose, as Commodore Preble cut out the frigate "Philadelphia" from under the forts of the Algerines.

It was a November night when Mr. Jacob Nubbin, wearing his best clothes, harnessed his horse into his wagon, and went rattling down the hills to rescue the prize from the enemy.

He had a present for her. It was rolling round under his feet in the wagon, — a squash. Although Captain Krinkle had a cart-load of squashes, yet a little present would show her how much he thought of her. It was of the crooked-neck variety and she could hang it on the pole overhead in the kitchen where the light would fall upon it during the long evenings, and ever as she turned her eyes towards it would think of the giver. And then when the time came for making it into pies, she would taste its sweetness and would think of him all the more.

Mr. Nubbin drove into the door-yard, tied his horse to the hitching-post, and creeping stealthily up to the window,

peeped in through the blinds. He was pleased when he discovered Deborah sitting alone. She was knitting. The vision filled him with ecstasy.

"Won't she knit 'em! Won't she rake in the quarters and the fifty-cent pieces! She'll earn her salt, I tell you," he said to himself. He rapped, and Deborah opened the door.

"Good-evening, Deborah," he said, ducking his head and reaching out his right hand, holding the squash in his left.

"Good-evening, Mr. Nubbin," she replied, inviting him in.

He was pleased to hear her say Mr. Nubbin. When he worked for Captain Krinkle she called him Jake. To be called Mr. Nubbin was a sign of an increased respect. He sat down in a chair, put his hat on one side and the squash on the other.

"It is a beautiful evening," said Deborah.

"Yes, I guess so." He could not at the moment collect his thoughts to say more.

"Quite likely we shall have a storm pretty soon," Deborah remarked.

"I shouldn't wonder; the wild geese are beginning to go south."

"Of course you miss your father very much."

"Yes,—but then not so much as you might think, perhaps; ye see the property is all mine now, except marm's third, and it keeps me pretty busy."

"How is your mother?"

"Well, marm is about the same; enjoys rather poor health, upon the whole. She ain't able to do so much as I wish she was. I reckon she just about earns her salt. She's got the rhumatiz, and is kinder thin; makes out to keep round, but she won't last always." Deborah waited for him to say something more, and the room was so still that they could both

hear every tick of the old clock, and Jacob could feel his heart keeping time with it, thump — thump — thump.

"The fact is, Deborah," said Jacob, moving uneasily in his chair, and nervously rubbing his hands, "I was riding down this way to-night and I thought I'd bring you a present. I've got a lot of squashes this year. The bugs didn't kill the vines, and I thought maybe you would like to have one."

"Mr. and Mrs. Krinkle will be much obliged to you, I am sure."

"It will be good to bile with turnips and cabbages, and it will make first-rate pies, only it takes 'lasses and sugar and nutmeg and all them things to make pies, and they cost money; but then, of course Captain Krinkle has got such heaps that it don't make no difference to him. Did you cut and string all them apples?" he asked, pointing to the apples that were drying on the frames.

"Yes."

"You are a buster to work, Deborah, that's a fact; and so am I. I can go it from morning till night. I'm up early, before the hens are off from their roost."

"You have so much money I shouldn't think that you would make such a slave of yourself," said Deborah.

"I ain't no slave; I do gest as I'm a mind to. I like to work. I like to see the dollars come in. I thought I'd come down to have a little talk with you, Deborah, and see if you wouldn't like to go up to our house to live."

"Thank you, Mr. Nubbin, but I am very well situated here, and I shouldn't like to leave Mrs. Krinkle."

"Mebbe ye didn't quite see what I was driving at. I didn't 'zactly mean to have ye come and work for wages, but I tho't as how perhaps you would like to be — to be — to be Mrs. Nubbin, — at any rate, I should like to have ye."

"Oh, no, Mr. Nubbin, I couldn't think of it."

"I was in hopes you would. I wish you would. I've sot heaps by you this ever so long, and have said to myself ever so many times there wasn't another gal in Millbrook that was your equal for making things hum. I wish you would say yes."

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Nubbin, for your good opinion, but I couldn't think of it, I'm sure," said Deborah, knitting vigorously.

Mr. Nubbin had no idea of giving up his suit because she said no. He hitched his chair a little nearer. But there was a sound of approaching footsteps, and Jonathan Jolly entered the room. Jonathan opened his eyes wide, gave a low whistle, as if comprehending the situation of affairs, and then said, —

"Why, Jake! how are you? Glad to see you."

"Pretty well, Jonathan; how do you do?"

Jonathan improved the opportunity to give Jacob an extra grip as they shook hands, and Jacob began a dance which was neither a polka, a waltz, a Virginia reel, nor any other with rhythmic steps, as Jonathan cramped his hands till the bones fairly cracked. In his antics Jacob kicked over his chair, put one foot into his hat, and set the other on the squash.

"Hold on there — there — there, that'll do, — O——oh! Blast your picter! I'll pay you for that," he screamed, as Jonathan played off his little joke.

"What's the matter? Why, I thought you was going into a fit, Jake," said Jonathan, with a look of wonderment in his face, while Deborah was convulsed with laughter.

Mr. Nubbin did not stop to talk with Jonathan, or to make any farther efforts towards ingratiating himself into favor with Deborah, but put on his hat and took his departure. He

ground his teeth firmly together as he rode toward home. He would pay Jonathan off some time. He did not like to think that he had given away a squash for nothing, and was determined in his own mind that no man should come between himself and Deborah. He would keep his eyes open and bide his time.

CHAPTER XIII.

DAN DOESN'T SEE IT.

DAN DISHAWAY was driving toward Millbrook with his cart empty of tinware but stuffed with rags and piled with pelts. It was an October day, and the woods were bright with the changing hues of autumn. Perhaps the sweet, sad season of the year may have had something to do with the state of Dan's feelings, for although he was a good distance from Captain Krinkle's house, his heart was there already. He was prospering in business, and was looking forward to the time when he could buy a snug little cottage, — one already picked out, — shaded by the elms, where the orioles and robins built their nests and made the air melodious with their songs. There was a yard in front, and a garden in the rear, and a stable, where he could keep his horse and cart when at home. In imagination he saw Deborah mistress of the cottage, with every room neat and trim, — snow-white curtains at the windows, rugs upon the floor, and her bright eyes ever on the watch for him whenever he returned from his wanderings over the country. Through the days and weeks and months the outlines of the picture were present to his mind, and like an artist, he was ever putting in a flower here and brighter coloring there, until it became an ever present vision.

Deborah always welcomed Dan with smiles. He had lived upon them and upon the brightness of her eyes. She had a smile for everybody, and a hearty grasp of the hand, but she was so kind to him he could but cherish the hope that beneath it there was a very tender regard. He was confident that when the right time came she would reach out her arms to him and lean her head lovingly upon his bosom. Oh, how blessed it would be to work for her! He was working for her now. Through the years that had rolled away she had been a party in consideration in the sale of every milk-pan, skimmer and ladle, and in the purchase of every pelt and bag of rags. To make a home for her, with lilacs, hollyhocks and gladiolas in the front yard, with roses climbing round the door, with cabbages, squashes, turnips, beans and cucumbers in the garden, with bees humming around their hives, storing honey for her and himself, with hens cackling in the barn and doves cooing on their perches, — to make a home where she would sing from morning till night: all this had made the weeks go swiftly by.

"I will let her know that I am coming," he said to himself, and though he was a half mile away, blew a long, loud blast upon his trumpet. It echoed up and down the valley and came back to him from the distant hills.

"I wonder if she will hear it." She! There were twenty girls in Millbrook who would hear it, but they would only say, "There! Dan is blowing his horn again; we must look up our rags." But Deborah alone would listen with rapture to the swelling notes. Now he could see the chimney tops; a little farther, and the roof of the house loomed upon his sight; a few steps more and he could see her chamber window.

"I will blow it once more and then I shall see her at the window." But though he blew a louder and longer blast,

though he watched with straining eyes for the white curtain to go up, it did not move.

Jonathan Jolly was picking apples in the orchard, and Deborah was taking down the clothes from the line beneath the trees, when they heard the blast resounding through the valley.

"Rag Bag is coming," said Jonathan.

"How fortunate! He will be just in time to fiddle for us at Mr. Pippin's party," said Deborah.

Dan drove round the corner of the house into the door-yard, and saw Deborah folding the clothes, and Jonathan close by, picking apples. It would have been rather more agreeable to him if he had found Deborah alone.

"Hullo, Rag Bag! How are you? Glad to see you," said Jonathan, calling to him from the orchard, while Deborah came up to the garden fence to shake hands with him.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come, Dan. I've been wishing you were here, for Mr. Pippin is going to have an apple party and all hands of us are invited. After we get through paring apples we are going to have a dance, and we want you to fiddle for us."

"I'll be there, Bright Eyes, you'd better believe," said Dan, shaking her hand heartily.

He gazed into her eyes, felt the warm grasp of her hand, then jumped upon his cart and gave a chirrup to his horse.

"I'll be there sure, you bet." There were smiles all over his face as he drove away.

Supper was over, the work for the day completed, and Jonathan having filled his pipe, sat down on the steps of the piazza to enjoy it. Deborah came and sat by his side, for it was not quite time to be on their way to the apple-paring. They sat there as they had on other evenings during the summer, enjoying the calmness and stillness of the twilight.

"How bright the stars shine and how beautiful they are!" said Deborah.

"Yes, the sky is as full of holes as one of Dan's skimmers," Jonathan replied, turning his eyes toward the stars.

"O Jonathan! what a funny fellow you are!" said Deborah, laughing at the absurd comparison.

"That is the biggest hole of all," Jonathan said, pointing to Venus, brightly shining in the west.

"That is the star of love," and Deborah lifted her eyes tenderly to his.

Instead of returning the affectionate look, he tickled her nose with a straw till she could bear it no longer and then playfully slapped him in the face.

If Miss Gilliflower had been sitting by his side and had said it was the star of love, Jonathan would not have tickled her nose, but would have put his arm around her. Year in and year out he had been to meeting regularly,—not because Mr. Canticle preached, but rather because Miss Gilliflower was in the choir and thrilled him when she sang. He was fondly looking forward to the time when he would be able to purchase a farm, and then he would see if Miss Gilliflower would help him carry it on. Entertaining such sentiments toward Miss Gilliflower, Jonathan could not in honor return the tender regard manifested by Deborah, but tickled her nose and ears and pinched her cheeks instead.

It was a gleeful gathering in kitchen and dining-room at Mr. Pippin's. The company sat in groups. The young men with their machines, pared the apples, and tossed them into the milk-pans and trays in the laps of the young ladies, who quartered and cored them. There was a generous rivalry between Jonathan and the other young men

to see which could pare a bushel the quickest. Perhaps the thought that there was to be something better than quartering and coring, that there was to be a more delightful pairing of parties, stimulated them to get the apples out of the way as soon as possible. Perhaps it was this which brought such a bright flush to Jonathan's manly countenance, and induced him to do his best, and possibly the fact that Miss Gilliflower was sitting by his side had something to do with his success in beating all his rivals. That she was pleased he could not doubt, else why the tender glance of her eye.

It was late in the evening when Dan arrived. He had been so long absent from home, and had so much to say to his mother, that the apples were out of the way and all hands ready for supper when he appeared. He could hear the merry laughter of the company before reaching the house, and it was so delightful to his ears, that he snapped the strings of his violin into tune, then halted on the door-step and struck up "Yankee Doodle."

"There's Dan! There's Dan!" "Good! Good!" "Won't we have a jolly time!" were the exclamations of the company, as if Dan were the one person above all others in the world who could make their happiness complete. A half dozen girls, Deborah among them, ran to welcome him.

"O Dan, we are so glad!" "We are ever so much obliged to you." "It is just like you to drop in at the right time." "Come right along." "Supper is all ready." "How do you do?"

He did not know who said this or who said that, for all were talking together. They led him into the kitchen and up to the fire that was glowing on the hearth, where they could see his honest face.

Supper was ready, and they helped themselves to baked beans, Indian pudding, apple and squash pies, and topped off with gingerbread and cake, coffee and cider. When it was over, Deborah, Miss Gilliflower and a half dozen others, rolled up their sleeves and made quick work of washing up the dishes, for they all said it would be a shame to leave them for Mrs. Pippin to do in the morning.

The table was then pushed into a corner, the chairs carried into the hall, and the kitchen cleared for the dancing. Dan placed a chair on the table and seated himself in it while the young men were choosing their partners.

Deborah could not understand why Jonathan should pass her by and select Miss Gilliflower, but girls with cheeks as plump as hers, and with eyes as bright, are never in want of partners at a dance, or anywhere else; and before there was time for vexation, envy, or jealousy to get a foot-hold with her, she was moving in a cotillon.

Dan wished that he could be tripping it on the floor, with Deborah for a partner, but if he were to lay aside his violin and step down from the table the dancing would cease; and so he gladly drew the bow across the strings, knowing that if he could not be supremely happy himself, he was giving pleasure to everybody else.

Cotillon, quadrille, waltz and reel succeeded each other, and long before the dancers thought of being weary, the hands of the old clock ticking in the corner swept round to the hour for going home.

Deborah put on her bonnet and shawl, and waited by the door for Jonathan. Miss Gilliflower was at the other end of the room drawing on her gloves, and Jonathan stood near her with his hat in his hand, looking unconcernedly here and there, as if waiting for something. Deborah

wondered what it might be. She saw him whisper in the ear of Miss Gilliflower, who took his arm. They swept past her out of the room, and she heard their footsteps in the yard. Then the lights upon the mantle suddenly grew dim, and there were tears in her eyes. She turned to dash them unseen away.

"Shall I see you home, Deborah?" It was Dan who said it. She took his arm and they went out into the yard, down the walk, through the gate and into the street. She had experienced a sudden faintness, but the fresh air revived her.

"We've had a real jolly time, haven't we?" said Dan.

"Yes; every thing has passed off pleasantly," she answered.

"Mrs. Pippin knows how to do things in tip-top style," said Dan.

"We are under great obligations to you, Dan; things wouldn't have gone quite so glibly if you had not been there," Deborah replied, feeling truly grateful for what he had done.

"I tried to saw off the tunes as well as I could. I wanted you all to have a good time, and somebody in particular. You can't guess who?"

"I guess it was Dolly Simpkins," said Deborah, naming a girl who was not a favorite. Dolly was not good-looking, and was not particularly amiable; for these reasons and also because there were more young ladies than gentlemen at the paring, Dolly had been a spectator and not a partner during the dancing.

"You didn't hit the nail on the head that time, Deborah. But I must say that I thought it a burning shame for all the young men to give Dolly the go-by, even if she isn't quite as good-looking as she might be. If there had been anybody to fiddle, I would have taken her for a partner."

Friend of the friendless ever. He had seen the slights put upon the girl, and wanted to do something to make it a pleasurable evening to her; but while he wished he could do something for her, he had seen one girl whirling in the dance who had inspired him by her presence.

"You'll have to guess again, Deborah."

"Miss Gilliflower." Deborah was sorry the next moment that she had named her, but Miss Gilliflower just then was uppermost in her thoughts.

"You ain't worth a cent at guessing."

She did not reply, and he went on.

"It was you, Deborah."

"Thank you, Dan."

"I made a discovery to-night," said Dan.

"Indeed! what was it?"

"Can't you guess?"

"No; I don't know what you mean."

"Can't you hear somebody's footsteps ahead? Can't you hear their voices? What do you suppose they are talking about?"

He did not know that his words were so many arrows shot through her heart. She made no reply and he continued.

"I reckon you didn't see how Jonathan and Miss Gilliflower looked at each other. I never suspected that Jonathan had his eye on her, but I supposed he was thinking of somebody else, and I'm glad to find that I was mistaken."

Still no reply.

"Deborah," he continued, "I've had something on my mind for a long while that I have wanted to say to you, and I guess I'd better say it now." Dan had laughed heartily through the evening, but now his voice was soft and tremulous.

"Let it go till another time," Deborah replied, catching her breath, her quick instinct divining what it was that he would say.

"No, I had rather say it now. I can't wait any longer."

Love was leading him; it had led him for years, and had now brought him to a decisive hour. It might have been better for him if he had heeded her request. Might have been! The workman at the loom may throw the shuttle and lay the threads to his liking, but who knows how to weave the woof of human destiny? Who knows? who knows? A question, an answer, and what we thought would be a golden fabric is changed to worthless stuff.

"I must say it now, Deborah. I love you."

Again she caught her breath. Could he have looked into her face he would have seen tears upon her cheeks, he would have seen her lay her hand upon her heart, but there was no moon and the stars which had been bright were growing dim.

"I know it, Dan. I've known it for a long while. I am sorry it is so." It was spoken with a faint voice, and sadly.

"I want to ask you — "

"Oh, don't, please don't ask me now," said Deborah, hastily interrupting him.

Her brain was in a whirl. She was thinking of Jonathan and Miss Gilliflower; of what Dan had said about them. Her heart had been going out toward Jonathan through all the years. She had gazed in admiration upon his manly face, had thought of him while awake, dreamed of him when asleep, and the thought never had entered her guileless heart that she was not all to him that he

was to her. She could hear Jonathan and Miss Gilliflower walking in advance of them. She had listened many times for his approaching footsteps, but now they were going away from her, never to return. If it is hard to stand upon the shore and see the ship that bears our loved ones from us sail out upon the ocean, even when we hope that in a few weeks or months or years they will come back to us, how much harder to bear the reflection that the one who has filled life with sunshine is sailing away to return no more! Pity the poor heart that experienced it. Deborah would gladly have laid her hand upon the lips of Dan. Again she said, —

"Please don't ask me any thing to-night."

It was spoken mournfully.

"O Deborah, do hear me! I must speak. A fire is consuming me. Won't you be my wife?"

He heard a sob. She leaned more heavily upon him and covered her face.

"I wish you had not asked me. Dan, I know you love me, but I can't be your wife."

The words cut him to the heart.

"You don't mean it."

"If you had not asked me, I should not have been obliged to say no, but please don't say any thing about it. You are good, too good for me, Dan, but I cannot marry you."

He had too much respect for her to say any thing more, nor could he have said much if he had been minded to continue the subject.

Two happy ones strolling down the road toward Miss Gilliflower's home; two stricken ones turning up the road toward Captain Krinkle's house.

"Deborah," said Dan, as they stood on the piazza,

"please forgive me if I have said or done any thing to-night that has given you pain, but before I go I want to say that I have loved you ever since I can remember. I have hoped that you loved me, but perhaps I had no right to think so. I have worshipped the very ground you walked on, and I always shall. God bless you and fill all your life with happiness. Good-by."

He reached out his hand; she took it mechanically.

"Thank you, Dan."

It was spoken faintly. She passed into the hall, and the door closed.

Dan was alone in the darkness. He walked he knew not whither, taking no note of the way.

Life was a blank, the past had no value, the future no hope. He sat down by the roadside beneath a tree, bared his forehead to the night air, and fanned himself to cool the fever that was burning him up. Clouds had overspread the sky, shutting out every star; there was no brightness in heaven or on earth.

Deborah in her chamber was going over the events of the night. She was grieved to think that Jonathan had passed her by and taken up with Miss Gilliflower; but hope springs immortal in the human breast; perhaps, after all, he did not mean any thing in particular by it. If he liked Miss Gilliflower, he never before had shown her any marked attention; perhaps it was only a passing fancy. She was sorry that Dan had said any thing to her. She had done what she could to stop him, but he would say it. He was ungainly and had queer ways. She respected him, and perhaps if there were no Jonathan in the world she might learn to love the kind-hearted fellow. Oh, if Jonathan had only spoken those parting words, how blissful the night would have been! But there it was — all a muddle.

The night was no longer calm ; the winds were sweeping down the valley and the withered leaves falling from the trees. They came whirling around Dan as he lay upon the ground. Like them, his bright hopes had withered before an untimely frost, and were scattered to the winds. The trees would put forth their buds when the winter was past, the leaves would re-appear in the springtime, the violets would come in the meadow, the crowfoot and clover would bloom on all the hills, but for him there would be never again a springing up of hope ; for him no bloom in life, but winter always ! There has been many a burial of dead hopes in the darkness, with but a single mourner to heap with breaking heart the sods above them. Hard it is to take the parting look, to lay them down, knowing that there can be no resurrection morn ; hard to say to the soul, "From henceforth they must be blotted from the Book of Remembrance." Pity the stricken one in the darkness, trying to dig a grave for his hopes. The winds are sighing above him ; they wail mournfully amid the pines. A storm is coming on and the rain-drops fall. The louder the storm the better for him, for he fain would seek peace in its uproar. The elms rock in the tempest ; wild gusts sweep past him ; the rain drenches him.

In the dull gray dawn, haggard and weary, chilled by exposure, with chattering teeth and quivering lips, his violin unstrung, the bow broken, as if the hand that had drawn it had lost its cunning, with wildness in his eyes and with faltering steps, Dan walked wearily up to his home, lifted the latch, climbed the creaking stairs and entered his chamber.

An hour passed. Breakfast was ready, but Dan was asleep and his mother ate alone, — thanking God for her

daily bread and for the gift of such a dear good son. The rain beat against the window panes and rattled upon the roof, and Dan was sleeping the while. Dinner was ready and he did not come.

"Poor boy! he was up all night and played for them; no wonder he is tired. I must have a good supper for him," said the mother.

Supper time: she sits by his side, not at the table, but by his bedside, bathing his fevered brow, and his burning hands.

Weeks go by; she is still there, where she has been through all the weary time. It is but a shadow of Dan lying there. Fever came from the exposure to the storm and tempest. In the burial of his dead hopes, life has all but passed away, but they are buried forever. Reason has returned and he can talk composedly of the past.

"I am sorry for you, my boy. It is hard to have a great hope that has filled life with brightness go out suddenly, like a candle when the wick is burned to the socket, leaving you in utter darkness. I think that Deborah would make you a good wife, but if her heart don't turn toward you, it is better for both of you to be as you are. And, my dear boy, don't forget that all things work together for good to those that love the Lord."

"I don't see it, mother," said Dan, with tears in his eyes and upon his cheeks.

"Of course you don't. The sorrow came suddenly. You didn't expect it. Your hopes that you have cherished for so many years are all dashed to the ground; your heart is wrung; your eyes are filled with tears: of course you can't see how it can be for good. But at the best, my boy, we are short-sighted, and it takes a very long sight to

look through all the years from early manhood to old age, and beyond it through the eternal years. All things work together for our good, but this is only one thing. It may be the greatest thing, but it is only one. I could not see when your father was brought in all mangled, the life crushed out of him, and you a baby on my bosom, how it was possible for any happiness to come to me in this world; but I have had a great deal, and expect to have all that I want, all that I am capable of, and to be filled like a cup to overflowing in the next world."

"There ain't any thing worth living for now," said Dan, drawing the back of his hand across his eyes.

There is no flower that sends its roots and fibres so deep down into the earth as true love into human hearts. Pluck up love by the roots, and it is a tearing up of the whole life.

"Nothing worth living for, my dear boy! Haven't you done what you could to make all the little boys and girls happy? Haven't you given them trumpets, whistles and dolls? Haven't you filled their little lives with sunshine? Haven't you made their fathers and mothers happy by giving so much pleasure to the children? Haven't you been happy yourself all the while, and wished now and then that there was something you could do to add to everybody's pleasure? And now, just because Deborah has refused you, will you turn your back on all your friends? Of course you won't. It wouldn't be like you, Dan. There is a great deal that is worth living for. Just think how many people there are in the world who are having a hard time of it, and how much you can do to help them on; how happy you can make them; how much you can do to make men better."

It was a brave heart that gave this encouragement, — a

heart, that, like a ship in the storm and darkness, had battled with the billows, and was riding serenely in a sheltered haven; and this faith, assurance and rest had been secured through the seeking of others' happiness, instead of her own. Her words gave comfort and strength to Dan. He knew that all she was saying was true; her life had proved it, and so had his own experience thus far in life. Should he now cease trying to make others happy because a great disappointment had come to him? The words of his mother, "It wouldn't be like you, Dan," were ringing in his ears.

No, it wouldn't be like him.

CHAPTER XIV.

BOILING SAP.

WHITE HAIR and his mates, like travellers upon a turnpike, had arrived at the cross-roads of life, and there were no guide-boards to tell them how far it was to Fame, Opulence, Comfort and Happiness, or which was the most direct way thither. Nor did it ever occur to them that the paths might take them to Blunder, Badjob and Hard Scrabble instead. Moses, Ben, Bell and Daisy branched off to Hilltown Academy, which was but ten miles distant. Linda could not go with them, her mother being an invalid and needing her care. She saw her mates take their departure, and then cheerfully assumed the duties of her life.

Caleb had expected to accompany them, and had looked forward with pleasure to the hour when he could stand within the academic halls, but when the time arrived his father had so many things on hand that he could not spare him.

"I need your help, my son," said Captain Krinkle. "I know you have set your heart upon getting an education; I know that you think it rather hard to be compelled to remain at home, while Moses, Job and Ben are getting the start of you; but I do not think that you will be a loser in

the end. The information that we get from books is of great value, but knowledge which comes from experience in practical life enables us to be self-reliant. By assuming care and responsibility, your manhood will be developed, which, after all, is better than any knowledge you may acquire from books. I intend that you shall have every possible advantage for making yourself a man, but just now I must ask you to stay at home and be my helper."

What could Caleb say to such confidence and trust? Only this: "I'll do what I can to help you, father."

He could hardly utter the words, and was forced to brush away a tear, for it was true, as his father had said, that he had set his heart upon going to the academy. It was not that, however, which brought the moisture to his eyes, but the confidence and trust reposed in him.

A young gentleman or lady at Hilltown Academy, — popularly supposed to be the best institution of the kind in the country, — could look complacently down from the exalted position upon a friend at home. Moses was conscious of the dignity which he had attained.

"My dear fellow," he said, as he met Caleb upon the street, "I wish you could go."

"So do I, but I can't," Caleb replied.

"You don't know what you are losing. It is grand. There are nice fellows, and girls, too, from Boston, New York, and all over the country."

"I have got to take care of things at home while father is absent; he has put most every thing into my hands," Caleb replied, with the view of letting Moses know that though he could not go to the academy, he was still of some consequence in the world.

"I am going to study Latin and Greek, French and

German, and I don't know what other languages. Father says that he wants me to have a thorough education, for I am to be a lawyer, perhaps a judge, and maybe a member of Congress. Won't it be glorious? It is really too bad that you have got to stay at home and look after the lambs and pigs."

"My time will come by and by." It was all that Caleb could say in reply, for something had risen in his throat which he was forced to gulp down as Moses drew aside the curtains of the future. He recalled with bitterness the first copy set by Miss Hyssop in his writing-book: "*Disappointment is the lot of man.*" He remembered how hard it was to make a capital D, and how the "lot of man" became totally depraved, and would leave the line and run up hill in spite of all he could do; how, before he reached the bottom of the page he became disgusted with the copy and wrote as fast as he could, without paying any attention to the hair strokes and shaded lines; and how Miss Hyssop, as a punishment for making such crow's tracks, reset it on the next page, and he had to write it a second time. Besides, he did not then believe the sentiment. The hurrahs of life were all pent up beneath his jacket and were struggling to get out; he was sure that disappointment would not be his lot, even if it was the lot of man in general.

Mrs. Krinkle saw the shadow that settled upon Caleb's face.

"I am confident, my dear boy, that in the end you will lose nothing. You know that your father and I have your welfare in life very much at heart. We will do what we can for you."

That soft hand upon his brow, the kiss upon his cheek, how healing! He forgot the disappointment, and manfully took up the trusts committed to his care; not only the chores

about the house and barn, but the tapping of the maple trees in the sugar orchard, and the boiling of the sap when spring came on.

It was not man's work, the grove of maples crowning the hill beyond Caleb's home, but God's gift. The trees had sprung up from the ground, the rains nourished them, the earth furnished them food, the sun gave them life, and they lived and flourished in regal beauty. People from Boston, searching for summer homes, came to Millbrook, because the elms and this grove were as a crown of glory to the place, and because it was so delightful to sit upon the mossy rocks beneath them and gaze at the meadows and mountains and gather the maiden-hair and other ferns that sprung up around the ledges.

In winter, when the fields and pastures were white with snow, it was the place where Caleb and his mates were accustomed to fly like the winds down the slope to the pond and across the gleaming ice to the farther shore. But now he had so many things on hand there was little time for coasting. It was hard work to tap the maples. It made his arms ache to bore the holes, insert the spouts, and fix the buckets beneath them to catch the sap, and still harder to drive his yoke of untrained steers when collecting the sap. The frisky cattle had no intention of losing their liberty and being compelled to draw a heavy sled with a barrel upon it; they took to their heels and ran pell-mell down the hill with their tails in the air and the sled turned bottom side up, but Caleb caught them, rapped them on the nose with his goad stick, and taught them the meaning of "gee Bright" and "haw Buck" so effectually that they became as sober as old oxen.

The house for boiling the sap stood in the centre of the

grove, sheltered from the north winds by the hill and an overhanging ledge. Through the day and late into the night Caleb kept the fires under the kettle going, reading and studying as he had opportunity. To relieve the monotony of the hours, he took a slide down the hill now and then, as he could find time, but it was rather dull music to coast alone. If he could have had Ben, Job, Linda, Bell, Daisy or Mary to enjoy it with him, it would have been glorious fun.

But he had one friend to keep him company through the days and evenings, — Dan Dishaway, who, while the snow was disappearing and the frost coming out of the ground, did not care to be plodding through the mud with his cart loaded with tin.

There was a deep and sincere affection between Dan and Caleb, — thankfulness on the part of Dan that he had rescued Caleb from drowning, and gratitude on the part of Caleb. The hours flew swiftly by when Dan was with him. It was a sad pleasure to Dan to sit in the doorway of the sugar-house and look down upon the farm-house, catching a glimpse of Deborah now and then as she went to the well for water or made her appearance on the piazza.

"O White Hair!" said Dan, "I shall always love her, and perhaps the time may come when I shall be able to do something to make her happy. I never shall love anybody else, never, never."

"Perhaps she will love you sometime," Caleb replied, wishing to say something that would comfort him.

"I don't expect it, White Hair. I am a great gawky, and she can't love me. I had hoped she would, but if she can't, she can't, and I have no right to complain."

Dan had recovered from his sickness, but the shadow of the great sorrow was upon him. If, perchance, he met

Deborah at meeting on Sunday, or on the street, he treated her with the utmost respect, but his longing eyes usually followed her till she was out of sight.

Deborah was sorry for him; she liked him because he was good. There was nobody else in the world, so far as she knew, that could call the doves from their perch, or coax the squirrels from the trees to eat corn from his hands. The surliest dog in Millbrook never barked at Dan, but crouched at his feet and licked his hand. On that day when he rescued Caleb from drowning, she felt that he was almost equal to the good men mentioned in the Testament, who could take up serpents, or lay their hands upon the sick and make them well, but for all that, her heart did not go out toward him as it did toward Jonathan. She could not believe that Jonathan was seriously paying his attentions to Miss Gilliflower. He would get enough of her after awhile.

Although Dan came to see Caleb often, and relieved the tedious monotony of the hours by his presence, Caleb could not help thinking of his mates at Hilltown, while watching the steaming kettles.

"Isn't it too bad," he said, "that I have to be tied up here while they are getting ahead of me?"

"Don't be in a hurry, White Hair," Dan replied; "the earliest sown wheat don't always produce the best crop. Take things easy, my boy. The time was when it used to make me grit my teeth to see other folks so intellectual and I a confounded fool, but then, what was the use of feeling bad about it? I have come to the conclusion that the best way is to enjoy all we can on our own account, and all we can on other folks' account, under all circumstances; and if the circumstances don't suit us, why, then do what we can to make 'em better. Hilltown Academy

is a good school, I reckon, but I think as likely as not that this maple grove is a better one for you just now. You are learning to do things on your own account. I'll back you, my boy, against the best of 'em at Hilltown. I know 'em. Ye see I go there after paper rags, and I get a heap. It's one of the best places on my whole route, — not many pelts or sheep skins, but lots of paper stuff. Ye see where there is two hundred boys and girls together in one institution, there will be a lot of writing going on. I pick up stuff enough to fill my old cart chock full. It is real entertaining when I've nothing else to do, and am sorting over rags, on rainy days, to read the compositions of the young ladies. I've speculated a good deal as to what a girl's mind is made of, it seems so sort of moonshiny like. They almost always write about flowers, moonbeams, the sighing winds, golden sunlight on the clouds, shedding the parting tear, and meeting in a better world, — just as if they were going to die in a few days, when every one of 'em expects to be a grandmarm! I don't understand it. Girls are queer creeters. Some of 'em pull the wool over a fellow's eyes before he knows what they are up to."

"Perhaps they think that we are queer, too," Caleb replied.

"I dare say, and I reckon that some of the chaps at the academy do get rather moonstruck, judging by their verses to the moon and Venus and Cupid. Ever so many of 'em write verses about Cupid shooting his darts. Why they should do it, I can't tell, and I don't believe they can, any more than the girls can tell why they write so much about "shedding the parting tear." If you ever feel like writing any love poetry, White Hair, just call on me, for I've got about a bushel of stuff, and may be after you read it you won't want to write."

Caleb was interested in what Dan was saying, for, on several occasions, while gazing at the moon and thinking of Linda, he had wished he could put his thoughts into poetry.

As Caleb watched the fires day by day, the thought came to him that he had it in his power to make everybody in Millbrook happy, by inviting them to a sugaring-off.

"Do it, my son," said Captain Krinkle; "invite everybody. Don't forget the old folks. Do your best, Caleb, to make everybody happy, if you want to promote your own happiness."

"I will help you," said Dan, who entered into the project with all his heart.

"Come over, all of you, and bring everybody else," was Caleb's message to Moses, Bell, Ben, Daisy and Mary at Hilltown.

The day before the one selected for the sugaring-off, Linda tripped down the hill to the farm-house, laid aside her bonnet, put on a white apron, and rolled up her sleeves, to help Deborah about baking the bread and frying the doughnuts. They heated the great brick oven, kneaded the dough, put what they could into pans for baking, and prepared the remainder for doughnuts. Little Maid stood at the moulding-board, rolled the dough, cut it lengthwise in narrow strips, and then crosswise, doubling and twisting the pieces, then handed them over to Deborah, who put them into the fry-kettle, and turned them with the skimmer when sufficiently browned.

Occasionally Caleb found time to drop into the kitchen to see how they were getting on, and what a vision it was! Little Maid with her white apron on, her pearly arms bare

to the elbow, a light flush on her cheek, her hair hanging down her back in braids and tied with a pink ribbon! With the sunshine lying along the floor, the room was filled with brightness.

CHAPTER XV.

SUGARING OFF.

TWO o'clock was the appointed hour, but the young folks could not wait for it; soon after one they were in the sugar-orchard where Caleb was tending the kettles. Dan was there in advance of them, popping corn, while Deborah and Linda were cutting the loaves of bread into slices and spreading them with butter.

There was a procession of sleighs winding up the hills, bringing men, women and children. Mr. Fielding came with his wood-sled piled with people. He stopped at the bottom of the hill, and the boys, who had brought their hand-sleds to have a good time at coasting, fastened them behind the team,—a dozen or more, like a train of cars,—each sled carrying a boy or girl, hurrahing as the horses pulled them up the hill. There was mischief in Mr. Fielding's eyes, when, at the top, he cracked his whip, and the horses starting quickly, broke the cord between the foremost sled and the team, and the entire train went down the hill helter-skelter to the bottom, everybody laughing and shouting and declaring that never before had they enjoyed such fun.

Deacon Goodman harnessed his horses, drove around to all the houses, and picked up the old men and women and the feeble ones, wrapping them in buffalo robes and blankets.

He brought Mrs. Fair, and gave her a sunny seat, where she could sit and see Caleb tending the kettles, Dan popping corn, and Deborah and Linda buttering the bread and arranging saucers and spoons.

They heard a jingling of sleigh-bells down the road, and saw a team with four horses on the trot, and a big boat on runners. It was "Cleopatra's Barge," the great Hilltown sleigh, with Moses, Ben, Bell, Daisy, Mary, and twenty more young ladies and gentlemen from the academy.

"Here we are!" shouted Moses, jumping out and shaking hands with Caleb.

"There is a lot of us; we'll lick your kettles dry, see if we don't," said Ben.

"I only wish the whole school was here," said Caleb, in his enthusiasm.

Moses presented his friends to Caleb.

"Mr. Flipkin, from New York," said Moses, introducing a young man who wore an eye-glass, and carried a rattan cane, with a dog's head in ivory on the top of the handle.

"I am delighted to see you. This is really a primitive occasion," said Mr. Flipkin, whipping his right leg with his rattan. He wore a glossy hat, yellow kid gloves, and a sky blue necktie, with a gold ring upon it. He unbuttoned his overcoat to get at his perfumed handkerchief in the pocket of his purple velveteen jacket, and Caleb saw that he had a heavy gold chain with charms and seals dangling from it. He was also cultivating a moustache. There were not many hairs on his lip, but he made the most of the few that were there by stroking them with his thumb and finger.

"Miss Bertha Wayland, from Boston," said Moses, introducing a beautiful girl about his own age, who wore a fur cloak and cap, and was richly dressed.

She had bright hazel eyes and dark-brown hair, and there

was a mellow ripeness on her cheek, heightened by the excitement and pleasure of the hour.

"How good it was of you, Mr. Krinkle, to invite us," said Miss Wayland. "This is a new and delightful experience to me."

There was something about her voice that thrilled Caleb. He was charmed by its melody, and was captivated by her beauty.

"I thought that it would be pleasant for my old schoolmates to invite some of their friends," Caleb replied with some confusion, not knowing exactly what he said.

"It was very thoughtful in you, I am sure. I have always lived in the city and never saw any thing of the kind before."

Moses introduced the rest of the party. There was a sparkling young lady from Down East, known among her mates at school as the "Morning Glory," another from Out West, — a tall, wide-awake girl, whom they called the "Prairie Flower."

Sympathetic relations were quickly established between Miss Wayland and Linda. They looked into each other's eyes, grasped each other's hands, and were as well acquainted as if they had dandled rag-babies together through their childhood.

"I should think that you would be very happy living here, where you can hear the birds sing in summer, and where you can gaze out upon the great blue mountains," said Miss Wayland.

"I should be very happy if my mother didn't suffer such pain. She has the rheumatism, and cannot help herself much. She says I am her little maid. She is here this afternoon and I want you to see her," said Linda, leading Miss Wayland to her mother, who was receiving the congratulations of

everybody; for there was not a person in Millbrook that did not look upon Mrs. Fair as a saint ripe for heaven.

"I am pleased to see you, Miss Wayland," said Mrs. Fair. "It is very kind in you to come over to Caleb's party. He is making us all very happy to-day. We never shall be able to repay him."

Others came to shake hands with Mrs. Fair, and the two girls stepped aside to give them a place.

"Oh, what a dear mother you have!" said Miss Wayland, who had been gazing upon the face so full of peace though marked with pain. "I was a very little baby when my mother died, and Aunt Janet is all the mother I have ever known. She is very good, but I don't think she is what my mother would have been. My father is rich and I have every thing that I want, except a mother's love. Aunt Janet cannot be to me what your mother is to you."

"I love my father and mother dearly. Father is a blacksmith, and works hard; there is his shop, that little old wooden building," said Linda, pointing toward the village; "and there is where we live, up there in that little cottage. I should like to have you see our flowers. They stand in the sun by the south window, and they are very beautiful. Mother says that they make her think of Paradise. The birds come in the spring and sit in the trees close by and sing to her, and she can hear the music of the waterfall by the mill, and the wind waving the trees, and the bell when it strikes the hour; and then she can hear father's hammer on the anvil, and knows that he is at work for both of us. The neighbors are very kind. Mr. Krinkle takes her out to ride in the summer. Mother says it seems as if everybody was commissioned to wait upon her. I sometimes think that this world is almost like heaven to her."

Miss Wayland looked at Linda with wondering eyes without replying.

Caleb's father and mother now arrived. They were the last of the party.

"We are Caleb's guests, as all the rest of you are," they said when they came.

"You ought to be proud of such a son," said Deacon Goodman to Mrs. Krinkle.

"I trust that I am thankful for him, and only hope that he will grow up to be a good man," Mrs. Krinkle replied.

"It is done enough for larbo!" shouted Dan. The word "larbo" will not be found in the dictionary, but everybody in Millbrook knew what it meant, — that the molasses was boiled just enough to be cooled into candy on the snow. There was a scampering for saucers and spoons. Bell, Mary and Daisy, Job and Moses waited on their friends from Hilltown, supplying them with bread and doughnuts.

"Oh, how delicious!" said Miss Wayland.

"Bless my soul, if I ever tasted any thing so nice!" said Mr. Flipkin.

Dan had prepared coffee, which was now passed round in tin cups.

Stories were told, jokes cracked, and all did what they could to make everybody else very happy.

The party from Hilltown, who never before had seen "a sugaring-off," watched Dan's movements while they were eating the corn-balls. The molasses was slowly boiling. If the fire was too hot, he reduced the heat by holding a shovel full of snow against the bottom of the kettles. He stirred a spoonful of molasses in a cup, held it to the light, touched it to his tongue, then suddenly put out the fire and stirred the mass in the kettle with all his might, using a great wooden spoon, and it changed as if by magic into sugar.

"It is perfectly splendid!" said the girl from Illinois.

"How very interesting," said Miss Wayland.

"It is a sweet operation," said the girl from Down East, who was given to punning.

While the party were watching Dan, Moses took Caleb aside to tell him about his Hilltown friends, and especially about Miss Wayland and Mr. Flipkin.

"They say," he said confidentially, "that Miss Wayland is one of the richest girls in Boston. She is an only child. Her father has ships at sea, sailing to India and China, bringing home silks and teas, camel's hair shawls and elephants' tusks, and all sorts of rich things. He owns a great house on Beacon street, and has ever so much money in the bank, and belongs to one of the first families. Miss Wayland is the handsomest girl at Hilltown. All the boys are dead in love with her, of course, but I cut them out; she came over on my invitation."

Now that Moses had cut loose from Millbrook, and had gone out into the great world, there was no reason why he and Caleb should be at odds. He could afford to be thus confidential, for Caleb would see that he was getting up in life.

"And Flipkin," Moses continued, "is the son of a rich New York banker. He is a first-rate fellow, spends money like a prince. We have high old times together, playing cards when the teachers think that we are studying hard or else snoozing in bed."

The boys who had brought their sleds, having had all the sugar, bread and butter, doughnuts and pop-corn they could swallow, were sliding down the hill. Miss Wayland saw them steering their sleds over a gleaming track, adroitly past a tree and hollow on one hand and a rock on the other. Midway the hill there was a sharp knoll, which was a try-

ing place to inexperienced coasters. If a sled was brought upon it at the proper angle, it would glide gracefully over and descend the slope beyond with the swiftness of the wind, but if through any miscalculation it did not come upon the knoll at the right place, the coaster found himself tumbling headlong into a snowdrift, or else rolling helplessly down the hill.

"Oh, how I should like to do that!" said Miss Wayland, as she saw a boy glide over the knoll, down the steeper slope beyond, and out upon the pond, almost to the farther shore. There were not many coasters that could accomplish it; most of them plunged into the snowdrift.

"Shall I have the supreme felicity of being your escort on this delightful occasion?" said Mr. Flipkin, who had borrowed a sled and was anxious to show Miss Wayland how nicely he could do it.

She hesitated, for of all that had gone down the hill, one only had escaped shipwreck. She did not quite care to be plunged headlong into the snow with Mr. Flipkin, with the Prairie Flower, who was a great tease, and all of the rest of her mates and all Millbrook, spectators of the scene.

"It will give me pleasure to guide the sled for you," said Caleb.

"Won't you tumble me into the snow?"

"I cannot promise you. I have been over the knoll many times and I think I can take you over all right."

"Please go with me, Miss Wayland. I've coasted ever so many times on the Central Park down the hill by the Ramble, and I assure you I can do it as well as that fellow has who has just gone over like a streak of lightning," said Mr. Flipkin.

"Thank you, Mr. Flipkin, but I think I will accept Mr. Krinkle's invitation."

Mr. Flipkin became very red in the face, for he had not counted upon being cut out by a country boy, and that too in the presence of all the Hilltown party and all Millbrook besides.

"I bow to the decision of the Queen of Beauty," he replied, stepping one side to see how the green country chap would get on with the Boston heiress.

"It will be my first experience," said Miss Wayland. "I have always been in Boston till this winter, and though there is sometimes excellent coasting on the Common, where the boys start from the top of the hill in front of the State House and slide half-way to Boylston street, of course we girls can't do it. I have wished ever so many times that I was a boy, so that I shouldn't have to be always prim and proper. Aunt Janet is constantly saying that I must behave with propriety, which means that I mustn't slide down hill."

"I do it," said Linda.

Miss Wayland seated herself on the sled. Caleb sat down behind her, his feet projecting over the rear of the sled, with his chin almost resting on her left shoulder.

She gathered her dress about her and clasped his arm.

"Good-by, all of you; I'm going on an unknown journey," she said to her friends.

"Please light upon a soft place when you go into the snow-drift," said Flipkin, waving his perfumed handkerchief as they started.

They moved gently at first, then faster, faster and still faster. The sled was shod with cast steel, and the polished runners glided over the glassy track, leaving no mark behind.

Faster, still faster, gaining upon those who had started in advance, whose sleds were shod with iron. Swifter than the wind they flew.

"Oh, I am afraid!" said Miss Wayland.

"I will bring you out all right. Hold on firmly as we go over the knoll." They were past the rock, past one sled, up even with another. The thought that they were outstripping the others stirred her blood.

Why? Why is it that bone and muscle in a horse, the getting round the course one-quarter of a second in advance of a dozen other horses, who are neck and neck, should cause one hundred thousand people to split their throats at Epsom, or Saratoga, or anywhere else, and make some men millionnaires, and send others to the dogs, losing houses, lands, ease, comfort, happiness and manhood, bringing in poverty, misery, degradation, broken households, broken hearts, to say nothing of the blowing out of brains? Why is it that this desire to get ahead, on a Mississippi steamboat, so stirs men's blood that they are willing to take the chances of going piecemeal into the air? To get ahead in the race, to experience the thrill, the exultation, the intoxication, how it warms the heart, raises the spirits, and fills the soul with ecstasy!

It was a new experience to the light-hearted young lady, whose whole life had been squared to Aunt Janet's injunction, — to behave properly. The exhilaration brought a brighter radiance to her beaming eyes.

"Please don't let me get shipwrecked," she said, as they went on with increasing swiftness toward the spot where the boys one after another were turning topsy-turvy.

"Hold on! here we come to it," was Caleb's only reply. He touched the ground gently with the toe of his boot. It was but a light touch and for an instant only, but it carried them round a curve, along the side of the knoll, over it as if they had taken to themselves wings.

"Oh, isn't it glorious!" Miss Wayland exclaimed.

Down the steep slope, over the bank, out upon the glassy surface of the pond, they flew with a momentum that sent them almost to the farther shore, and then, not allowing her to get off, he drew her back again across the pond, passing over the spot where on that sunny summer day, in the years gone by, he went down beneath the waters.

"It was right down here beneath us," said Caleb, as he stopped and told the story.

"What a noble fellow Dan must be, and what a brave-hearted girl Linda is. I loved her the moment I saw her," said Miss Wayland.

Mr. Flipkin had watched them from the top of the hill, and their success but quickened his desire to let the people know that he could do a thing or two. Perhaps the reflection that Miss Wayland had chosen Caleb instead of himself had something to do with it. Would it not be delightful to be able to tell his city cousins of the jolly time he had had sliding down hill with the blooming country damsels? Linda was the fairest of them all. She was not so rollicking as Bell Blossom, but she was wide awake, and had been tripping through the crowd, looking after everybody's wants, as if mistress of the occasion.

"Miss Fair, shall I have the pleasure and honor of your company?"

"Oh, certainly," said Linda. Many a time had she been down the course with Caleb. Many times had she guided the sled herself over the knoll, and was confident that she could do it again.

"Here we go, hooray!" shouted Mr. Flipkin, as they moved away. The sled was leaving the track. An itch of vanity seized him; he would let the country folks know and his Hilltown friends see that he could steer. He put his foot upon the ground, the sled shot from the path.

"Hullo! Flipkin! where are you going to?" shouted one of his friends.

"There is a rock on one side and a hollow on the other," said Linda, who saw that the chances were that they might come to grief.

"Well, what of it?"

"Oh, nothing, only you must steer between them," said Linda.

"All right."

But it wasn't all right, for in attempting to avoid Scylla he ran straight into Charybdis. In giving the rock a wide berth, he plunged into the hollow. They shot over the edge, struck upon the other side with a jounce that jostled Flipkin from his seat. He turned a somersault and then went sliding on his back over the ice and crust to the bottom of the hill, with his hat jammed down over his eyes, his velvet jacket sadly torn, to say nothing of the rents in his pantaloons. Although the sun was shining brightly, stars were blinking in his sky. He succeeded in lifting his hat after several efforts, and looked around for Linda, and saw her gliding across the pond. She had maintained her seat, had guided the sled adroitly, hearing all Millbrook laughing and shouting behind her to see how gracefully she had dropped Mr. Flipkin, like a piece of baggage, on the way.

But the sun was sinking in the west. The people thanked Caleb for the pleasure he had given them, and took their departure.

"The credit belongs in a great measure to Dan," said Caleb.

There was a shaking of hands and saying of good-byes with the Hilltown party.

"I want to tell you, Miss Fair, that I love you," said Miss Wayland, putting her arm around Linda. "Mr. Krinkle has

been telling me how you and Mr. Dishaway, or Dan, as you call him, saved his life. What a dear, good, brave girl you are."

"I only did what my heart prompted me to do; if there is any praise due any one, it is to Dan; but please call me Linda."

"And you call me Bertha, and let us be friends forever." And the covenant was sealed on the instant with a kiss.

"Mr. Krinkle, I cannot tell you how much I have enjoyed this day. It is a new experience. I shall remember it forever, and I want to thank you for it all."

"I am glad that I have been able to give you any pleasure," Caleb replied.

Now and then we hear a strain of music which remains forever in memory; weeks, months and years may pass, but the sweet melody will still be falling on our ears. The music of Miss Wayland's voice was like an *adagio* or an *andante* of Beethoven.

The Hilltown team was waiting. Caleb gave Miss Wayland his hand and she stepped into the great sleigh, which had come down the hill and was waiting for her at the bottom. The driver cracked his whip, the four horses that were impatiently champing their bits sprung to their traces; there was a waving of handkerchiefs, cheers and good-byes, and then "Cleopatra's Barge," with its laughing crew, disappeared down the road.

CHAPTER XVI.

POETIC DAYS.

THE roses were blooming by the pathway that led from the street to the blacksmith's house, the morning glories were climbing toward the windows, the air was fragrant with perfume, and the birds were singing in the trees, but Linda's mother, who had ever enjoyed the beautiful in nature, who had listened with rapture to the twittering of the swallows and to all the feathered songsters, was no longer there. She had passed away, and Linda and Mr. Fair were the sole occupants of the cottage.

The cloth upon the table was as white and clean as ever, the room as neat and tidy, for Little Maid was about the house from morning till night. With cheerful resignation Little Maid took up the duties of life just as they came to her day by day. She was no longer a girl, but seemingly had passed at once into maidenhood. No one thought of her as being handsome. Bell, Daisy and Mary and several other girls would sooner have been selected as types of beauty, but still there was that about her, a grace of manner, a light upon her beaming face, that made her beautiful. She filled the little cottage with the brightness of her presence. When she walked down the street, Millbrook was all the more beautiful because she was there, and those who

saw her going into the meeting-house on Sunday morning, thought of her as sanctifying the place by her goodness. The young men, and several men in middle life, thought it worth while to be early at church to obtain a sight of her fair face, to gaze upon the brown hair neatly parted on her brow, and catch the gleam of the soul beauty in her eyes. They raised their hats and bowed as she passed up the gravelled walk. When the bell ceased its tolling they went in and sat where they could have a good view of her in the singers' seats. No matter how calm and peaceful the day, her presence made it all the more peaceful. If perchance she was not at meeting, they had a sense of something gone which they could ill afford to lose. Then the singing was spiritless and the sermon dull and prosy. If the sky was overcast on Sunday morning and the day promised to be gloomy, there were some who went to meeting because the house would be filled with sunshine if Linda were there. It would be more pleasant there than at home. So it came about that some young gentlemen attended meeting not because they loved to join in the worship, or because the minister preached eloquent sermons, but because Linda illuminated the place.

Caleb was a member of the choir, and if perchance there came a duet between the soprano and tenor, and Mr. Clef, the organist and leader, said "Miss Fair and Mr. Krinkle will sing the duet," it put him on his mettle to do his best. With Linda to lead him he could not fail. By the sweetness of her voice, by her goodness and purity, by her conception of truth, she lifted him up, as it were, to a higher plane of life.

Autumn came. There was a mellow light upon the hills and a deepening haze in the valleys. The swallows

that had wheeled in graceful circles, the blue-birds which had been first to arrive in spring, the thrushes and the bob-o-links which had made the month of June melodious with their songs, the robins, orioles and finches, the whole chorus of summer songsters which had been singing the Jubilate Deo, were gone from forest and field to their far-off Southern homes. The crows and jays remained. They were calling to one another in the woods, as if afraid of getting lost in the solitude. The crickets were chirping their farewells in the sheltered nooks, but there was a hushed stillness on mountain and meadow. The days were shortening, and the shadows at nightfall crept quickly down into the valley. Marvellous the changes! The elms and birches had robed themselves in buff, the oaks in russet, the beeches in citron and gold, the maples in rose, ruby and scarlet, in sorrel, claret and damask, in carnation, magenta, carbuncle and crimson, in vermeil dyes of every hue, in purple and plum, in orange and amber, with veins of gold and filaments of silver. They were mottled and marbled, dappled and clouded with russet opal and emerald. How wonderful the alchemy of nature, which, almost in a single night, can put on such richness of color, that can transform the bright green vestments into attire more richly embroidered and more gorgeously emblazoned than any garments ever worn by cardinal or king!

Transparent the days. The sky was without a cloud, and the declining sun shone from the clear blue depths of heaven with ineffable sweetness.

Why it was he did not know, but on those celestial days Caleb experienced strange and undefined longings after he knew not what. He was at work in the field digging potatoes, but whenever he stopped a moment to gaze upon the wondrous beauty, his eye instinctively turned toward

the cottage on the hill, and he wondered if Linda was looking out upon the scene, or if she experienced similar longings for the unattained. It seemed as if the crickets were thinking of her, for they were saying "Linda, Linda, Linda," as if hers was the sweetest name on earth to mingle with their songs.

And at night, when his work was done, Caleb sat beneath the old elms and gazed upon the light fading from the western sky, and beheld the growing brightness of the evening star shining in the heavens above her house, and he thought of it as resting as the star in the East had rested above the holiest spot on earth. There was no other place where he would offer such gifts and adoration as at the feet of the dear girl to whom he owed his life. She was so pure and good that he thought of her as the counterpart of Eve in Eden before yielding to the tempter's wiles. Linda was the personification of innocence.

Caleb called upon Linda in the evening, when his work was done. She saw him before he reached the gate, and went down the walk to meet him, her garments brushing the gladiola, verbenas and geraniums that bordered it, filling the air with their perfume.

"You come to meet me as Discretion came out from the palace Beautiful to meet Christian," said Caleb.

"Would that I were like her," was the reply. She held out both hands to him as he opened the gate. They strolled up the path to the vine-shaded porch.

The blacksmith was sitting in his favorite seat, smoking his pipe. He knocked the ashes from the bowl, laid it upon the little shelf above his head, and shook hands with Caleb.

"I am glad that you have come, White Hair," said Mr.

Fair. "I want somebody to sing with us. We miss mother sadly when we come to singing. But it is a comfort to think that she has all the angels of God and the good of all ages to sing with now, instead of only us two. I can't get along without singing. I don't see what folks do that never sing. I don't wonder they grow rusty and become like old iron."

"It is wonderful," he continued, "this power of the human voice to make sweet sounds, to express ideas, to lift the soul to lofty aspirations, to open, as it were, the very gates of Paradise! If the human voice is capable of such expression, what must be the music of the angels? The morning stars sang together; the angels sang when Christ was born; there will be a great multitude singing 'Worthy is the Lamb' and shouting 'Allelujah,' and why people don't sing more on earth I can't understand."

There was no voice in Millbrook, or in all the country round, so deep and rich as Mr. Fair's. It was like the diapason of an organ. There was no soprano voice like Linda's.

They sang together while the twilight faded. They sang till the sexton rang the nine-o'clock bell, when the blacksmith shook hands with Caleb, received his good-night kiss from Linda, and retired to his room.

How delightful to Caleb to sit there beneath the overhanging vine! Ten o'clock came before he was aware of it. It was time for him to be at home; and time for Linda to go in out of the chill night air.

The good-night that was spoken — he heard it all the way down the hill. As he thought of her he wished that he could sing her praises, — that he could put into verse what the crickets were singing. Then it would not be merely her name, "Linda, Linda, Linda," but her truth,

goodness, and beauty. If the crickets never changed their notes, if it was never Bell or Daisy, it was because Linda was the one bright being on earth worthy of their praise.

Caleb tried to write out the thoughts that stirred his soul. It was hard work. He could feel her goodness and beauty, but how to describe her was not so easy. He could think of the beauty of flowers, the richness of grapes, of Venus as the goddess of love, of a dove as the emblem of peace. He sat absorbed in thought, his pen resting on his paper, dipping it now and then into the ink, writing a word, scratching it out, thinking, starting anew, endeavoring thus to woo the muse. He came to the conclusion that poets must select their rhyme words first, then fill in the ideas. After several trials he settled the rhymes in the order of

. . . . . bowers,
. . . . . flowers,
. . . . . bright,
. . . . . night,
. . . . . dove,
. . . . . love.

The lines were reversed, changed, as a thrifty housewife changes, re-colors and makes over her last year's dress. The filling was re-written, interlined, erased and restored. Finally he decided that it should be thus :—

IMPROMPTU TO LINDA.

"Richer than grapes upon the vine-clad bowers,
Fairer than all the blooming summer flowers,
Or Venus in the azure sky so bright,
Is Linda, peerless as the darkening night,
And gentler than the peaceful dove,
So full of joy and life and love."

The bell was striking the midnight hour when he finished the stanza. He read it over, and said to himself that if it was not quite equal to Tennyson's it would compare favorably with a good deal of the poetry he had read. So enraptured was he by the theme, that he could think only of "peaceful dove" and "life and love." He tried to drop off to sleep by counting the ticks of the old clock in the kitchen. He counted "One, two, three," but before he was up to fifty it was "life and love." He thought of sheep going through a gate one at a time, and counted them as they passed, "One — two — three — four;" so far they passed slowly, but now they came faster, "five, six, seven," and then the whole flock went pellmell through the passage, and he was more wide awake than ever!

The sun was shining in his face and Deborah shouting that breakfast was ready when he awoke. He could not refrain from looking at the lines before he went downstairs. He read them aloud, but their measure did not appear to be quite so melodious as when he finished them. He read them again in the evening, and wished that he could improve the last lines. He dipped his pen into the ink again and again, ran his fingers through his hair as he meditated upon the theme, but could not fashion them to his liking.

Then there came the remembrance of what Dan had said: "If you ever feel like writing verses about Cupid or Venus, come to me. I have a bushel of poetry."

He dashed his pen upon the table, crumpled the immortal verse in his hand, and held it in the candle's flame till it turned to ashes, and said while doing it, —

"If the thoughts will not breathe, the words will burn, which is about all that can be said of a good deal of the stuff that passes for poetry."

CHAPTER XVII.

THANKSGIVING.

"*The compliments of Miss Daisy Davenport to Mr. Caleb Krinkle and lady, requesting the favor of their company Thanksgiving evening, November 27th.*"

THE note was daintily written upon gilt-edged paper by Daisy herself. Everybody knew that she was to give a party on Thanksgiving evening, for the news had gone from house to house. Daisy's companions of her own sex were in a flutter of excitement. What dress should they wear, delaine, poplin or silk? Which would be the most becoming, a pink, blue or purple ribbon? Should they do up their hair in a French twist, or should they frizzle and scramble it?

If the young gentlemen did not let their thoughts run upon such vanities, they were not indifferent to the forthcoming event. They gave their horses extra measures of oats, that the animals might be in good spirit on Thanksgiving night; braided new snappers to their whips, purchased bottles of bear's grease at Mr. Meek's store, spent more time than usual before the looking-glass, while shaving the down from their cheeks, and did other equally sensible things preparatory to the approaching evening.

Caleb had so many things to do about the farm before

winter set in, — getting the sheep from the pastures and the cattle from the fields, that he could not go at once, as he wished to do, to invite Linda, but when the work was done, with a light heart he hastened up the hill to see "the lady." With a bright smile Linda welcomed him into the cheerful sitting-room. Her father was not there, and they could have a quiet talk by themselves he thought. "She knows what I have come for," said Caleb to himself as he saw the lighting up of her countenance.

"Shall I have the pleasure of your company on Thursday evening?" he asked.

"Thank you, Caleb, but I have already accepted an invitation."

"Accepted an invitation!"

"Yes. Mr. Flipkin has come over with Moses to spend the vacation here, and has invited me to go with him. It would have given me quite as much pleasure to have gone with you, but I could hardly do otherwise than accept his invitation."

"Mr. Flipkin!"

Caleb was surprised, but reflected that Mr. Flipkin was attending school at Hilltown with Daisy, and it was quite natural that he should invite her. His plans, however, were upset by the intelligence.

"Perhaps I can tell you some more news," said Linda. "That beautiful girl from Boston, Miss Bertha Wayland, is to be there. She has come over to spend Thanksgiving with Mary Fielding, and Moses has invited her to go with him to Daisy's party."

This was a revelation indeed. Moses going with the Boston heiress! Henceforth Moses might be called "the lucky One!" But what was he himself to do? Mr. Flipkin had secured Linda, — was already in Millbrook stopping

with Moses, and the two were roaming through the woods shooting partridges, as Linda informed him. Whom should he carry? He was provoked already with Flipkin. What right had he to step in and secure the best girl in Millbrook? Linda saw the disappointment revealed in his face.

"I am sorry, Caleb, that things have turned out so, but I could not very well refuse Mr. Flipkin's invitation when Moses came with him. He is a stranger here, you know," said Linda.

"Please don't think that I blame you, Linda, but what am I to do? Who is there that I can invite? The girls have all been picked up by this time."

"There is one girl who I think hasn't yet been invited, and I think that she would be glad to go with you."

"Who?"

"Bell, and I want to talk with you a little about her. I am afraid that she will be left at home unless you carry her. You know that Moses usually has been her escort, but he has invited Miss Wayland, and Bell feels badly about it. She don't think that Moses has used her quite right, and more than that, she is afraid that she will be left out in the cold."

"I hope not," said Caleb.

"I shall not enjoy the evening," Linda replied, "if she is not there. I could not be happy if I knew that she was at home alone while all the rest of us were enjoying ourselves."

"If she will go with me I will see that she is there," Caleb answered. If he was disappointed in not having Linda for his "lady," the look of gratitude that she gave him when she knew that Bell's happiness was assured, made ample amends.

"How unselfish she is! Always looking after the happiness of others, never thinking of herself!" was the thought that came to Caleb as he proceeded on his way to invite Bell.

The day came. There was no ringing of the bell so joyful as that of Thanksgiving morning, calling the people to come and give thanks to God for his goodness through the year; for the bountiful harvest that had been garnered; for the return of the happy day; for the reunion of friends; for unnumbered blessings bestowed. The farmers and their families — all except one member of the household who stayed at home to look after the turkeys roasting in the ovens — came to meeting, not merely to hear what the minister would have to say, and hear the choir sing a Thanksgiving anthem, but to see who had come up from Boston, who from Down East, who from Out West, to the old homesteads. They would shake hands with old acquaintances and recall the past.

The bell opened its brazen lips, now toward the north, now toward the south, flinging its joyous peals far away up the valley toward the mountain, down the valley toward the plains. "*Welcome — welcome — welcome!*" clanged the iron tongue. The maple grove took up the strain and sent the echo to the other side of the river. A distant hill repeated it, another still farther away rehearsed it in fainter tones. "*Welcome to the old; welcome to the young; welcome to everybody!*" Old men with tottering steps crept to cottage doors to hear the praises in the air. "*God's mercies,*" said the bell to them. They thought of another twelvemonth passed, and the pilgrimage not ended; another year gone by, and so much nearer heaven! For them had still been poured the wine of life. Many

times the weeping trains had passed the church-yard gates to lay the precious dust of dear departed friends beneath the bending elms; fairest flowers had faded; infancy, youth and manhood had gone to the grave, but they were yet alive to hear the story of God's mercies swelling on the air. They wept and smiled by turns, rejoicing that God's hand still led them on.

"*Joy! joy! joy!*" said the bell to Caleb, to Linda, to Daisy and all their mates;—joy to-night, joy through all the coming years. The silver morning shall be followed by a golden eve; after the sunny day shall come a starlit night.

The sermon was adapted to the occasion, the anthem was well sung, and Miss Bertha Wayland was there to hear it; and because she was there, Caleb did his best, and so did Linda and Bell and Job, and all the rest of the young folks in the choir. Her presence was an inspiration. Moses and Mr. Flipkin did not care to attend meeting to hear a prosy sermon, but found more pleasure in trying their skill with their rifles at a "turkey shooting" in the meadow. The people in the meeting-house could hear the crack of their guns.

After the service there were hearty congratulations among friends; then a hastening home to dinner,—to turkeys and chickens, puddings, pies, nuts and apples, and mugs of cider; to jokes, conundrums, stories, weighing on the steelyards, measuring of heights, and trotting of children on the knees.

Evening came. Lights were gleaming in parlor, sitting-room, kitchen, and chambers, and the full moon was pouring a flood of light on farm-house, forest, and field, as if to make Daisy's party more brilliant than any that had ever been given in Millbrook. Sleighs were coming from the east and from the west, from the north and the south, up

the valley, and down the hills. The young men were touching up their horses, that the young ladies might see how fast they could travel, and to let them know that there was not a horse in town that could go by them.

Arriving at the house, the ladies went up stairs, laid aside their cloaks and bonnets, fixed up their ribbons, smoothed their hair, turned this way and that way before the looking-glasses, and asked each other if they were all right behind. The gentlemen went into another chamber, took off their overcoats and caps, and piled them on the bed, pulled down their vests, and pulled up their collars. Then they went down-stairs into the sitting-room, and toasted their feet before the bright wood-fire blazing on the hearth; looked into the book-case, at the photograph album on the table, at the pictures on the walls; walked nervously round the room. not quite knowing what to do with themselves.

Most of the gentlemen were farmers, who could hold the plough, or swing the scythe, or use the hoe and shovel. Their coats were not of the finest broadcloth, nor were their garments fitted to them by a tailor, but were purchased at the store.

Moses, however, appeared in a new suit, which well fitted him,—a black dress-coat, vest and pantaloons. He wore kid gloves and a blue silk necktie, and carried a watch with a gold chain. His hair was nicely parted and perfumed. He was perfectly at ease, and stood before the fire balancing himself on one foot while warming the other. His countenance was fresh and fair. He had assiduously cultivated a patch of white furze upon his upper lip, though every other portion of his face was closely shaven.

Mr. Flipkin wore a dress suit and white kid gloves,

with his hair parted in the middle, and his eye-glass dangling from a black cord around his neck.

"Good-evening, gentlemen. I am very happy to see you." It was Daisy, who came to invite them into the parlor.

Linda and Miss Wayland were talking together, when Caleb, following Moses and Mr. Flipkin, entered the room.

"I gives me pleasure to meet you again, Mr. Krinkle," said Miss Wayland, courtesying and extending her hand.

"Thank you. I am happy to see you once more in Millbrook."

"Oh, that day of last March, Mr. Krinkle! It was so delightful! I have wanted a thousand times to see you, to thank you again for the enjoyment you gave me."

"I think that the obligation is the other way, and that I ought to thank you for honoring the occasion with your presence," Caleb replied, and then wondered how it ever came about that he could make so fine a speech.

"I am glad that you brought Bell," said Linda, as Miss Wayland turned to speak to others.

Moses bowed stiffly to Bell, and said "Good-evening." She barely recognized the salutation. The ladies, for the most part, occupied one side of the room and the gentlemen the other. They were all well acquainted, were accustomed to see each other every Sunday, and at the meeting of the sewing-society, and on other occasions, and had laughed and chatted together at singing-school, but the gentlemen just then could not think of any thing to say. They were entering society, and did not know how to do it. The atmosphere was new and strange. Society would demand pretty little speeches, brilliant sentences, witticisms, flatteries, words that meant nothing. They would not perhaps have been quite so bashful if Miss Bertha Wayland, from Boston, had not been there.

"It is rather difficult for us to put on our *otium cum dignitate*, Moses remarked, with an inclination of his head toward the group of diffident ones, as if he himself belonged to a separate order of beings. The young lady with whom he was talking had no idea as to what the words might mean. Job pricked up his ears, however, but said nothing. Through boyhood they had enjoyed breezy sailing, but now had reached the doldrums. They were becalmed, like the ships in that weedy sea of the tropics. Their hands were not in the way anywhere else, but here they did not know what to do with them. To put them in their pockets would not be genteel, to fold them they were not accustomed, to stand with them behind their backs all of the time would be an awkward position, to clasp them in front would look better in a prayer-meeting than in a Thanksgiving party; so, in trying to appear at ease, they assumed a variety of awkward attitudes.

In by-gone days they had played "Stage-coach," "Copenhagen," "Blind Man's Buff;" now they were not quite certain that "society" would permit any thing of the kind: but as the children of Israel hankered for the leeks, garlics, onions, melons and cucumbers of Egypt, so they longed for the dear old times. Not a few of them had already come to the conclusion that it was rather a stupid affair, when Daisy entered with a cane, asked them to be seated, and then began, "He — can — do — little — who can't do this," rapping three times on the floor and passing the cane on to Caleb.

"He can do little who can't do this," said Caleb, rapping three times.

"Right," said Daisy, as Caleb passed it to Miss Wayland.

"He can do little who can't do this," she repeated, rap-

ping three times, but without the least idea of the meaning of either the words or the raps upon the floor. She passed the stick on to Job.

"Wrong," said Daisy.

"I don't see but that I did it just as you did," she replied, wondering where the mistake might be.

"He can do little who can't do this," said Job, in a deep bass voice, with slow and measured accent.

"Of course Job would have it right; he never does any thing wrong," Daisy remarked. The compliment was so unexpected and so sweetly spoken that it brought the color into Job's face. He passed the cane to Mary, who did it right, and now it came Mr. Flipkin's turn.

"He can do little who can't do this." He rattled the words off glibly, rapped on the floor as the others had done, and passed the cane on to Linda.

"Wrong," said everybody that had done it right, and all others that knew how to do it. This universal decision astonished Mr. Flipkin, who thought he saw that the difference between the right way and the wrong was in the number of raps.

"Oh, I see! I'll do it next time." And Mr. Flipkin rubbed his hands in glee as he saw just where the secret was concealed.

"You emphasize 'little:' that is it," he whispered to Linda. She only smiled, but did not enlighten him. Before the cane had gone the rounds, Miss Wayland discovered the mystery. It came again to Mr. Flipkin.

"He can do *little* who can't do this."

"Wrong! wrong! wrong!" shouted everybody.

"Wrong?" he exclaimed, with a blank stare and an open mouth, that gave him a ludicrous appearance. "I'll be blamed if I didn't think it was on 'little.' Oh, I see!

it is on 'this.'" And he went over the words, emphasizing "this."

"Wrong! wrong! wrong!" they shouted once more, enjoying his bewilderment.

"Oh, I see! I didn't rap hard enough."

He tried it, and it was still wrong; tried soft raps, measured his words, but with every trial the muddle became more incomprehensible, till Linda, out of sheer compassion, showed him the difference between the right way and the wrong way of doing it.

Easy the transition to "magic writing" and then to "black art," Bell doing the writing, drawing cabalistic signs on the carpet, and making punctuation marks in a way that convulsed them with laughter. Then they played "Here Comes a Ship." Most of the gentlemen and quite a number of the ladies were very soon at their wits' end in regard to the cargo, but Job and Miss Wayland seemed to have no end of boxes, bags, bales, bundles, babies, or something else beginning with B, on board the ship when it came into port. They went on so long that Caleb wondered if they had been studying the letter B for the evening's entertainment.

Then came the admission of new members to the "Society of Great Expectations," with Bell as the sibyl to perform the ceremonial rites.

All but the members of the Society were packed off into the wide hall and sitting-room. One by one they were called into the parlor to be initiated. The candidates in the hall could hear the voice of the sibyl slowly and solemnly repeating the ritual; they could hear the candidate saying "I promise," and then came the clapping of hands and merry peals of laughter. They wondered what it was all about. Those who stood by the door

could catch a glimpse when one was called in. Bell was seated upon a throne arrayed as a queen, with a paper crown on her head, a silver fork in her hand, and there was a mysterious array of things around her: a cricket on which the candidate kneeled; a table near at hand, with something upon it covered by a napkin. What it all meant they could not imagine.

When all were initiated, when all had laughed till the tears rolled down their cheeks and their sides were aching, Daisy's father and mother came in to shake hands with them and to invite them to supper. There were cold chicken and tongue, slices of delicious bread made by Daisy herself, who had taken a premium at the county fair, apple pie, mince pie, pumpkin pie, cup custards, gingerbread, sponge cake, Thanksgiving cake, and black cake frosted and ornamented, cranberry tarts, coffee, tea, and glasses of sweet cider.

The gentlemen not being accustomed to hold a plate and a cup of coffee while standing, or to wait upon the ladies while eating, did not get through supper without some embarrassment. Ben unfortunately spilled his coffee and dropped his tart. He grew red in the face. "*Eventus stultorum magister*," said Moses.

No one made reply, not knowing the meaning of the high sounding words; though Caleb noticed that Job again pricked up his ears. As no one asked Moses to put the phrase into English, its effect was likely to be lost, somewhat to his disappointment.

"Would you like to know the meaning of it?" he asked of Linda.

"I am not particular," Linda replied, with perfect self-possession, which brought out a bright flush upon Moses' forehead, who was not a little disturbed by the quiet rebuke.

Ben was very much confused over what had happened, and Miss Wayland, taking pity on him, said, —

"Your mishap is not so bad as one that I once saw, where a gentleman spilled a custard into a lady's lap."

"He ought to have been taken into custody," said Job. It was spoken soberly, and all laughed so heartily as to quite forget what had happened to Mr. Tottle.

"I am as ignorant as a child about things in the country," said Miss Wayland to Ben. "I don't know the difference between wheat, rye, oats and barley. How do they look when growing?"

"Wheat does not grow so tall as rye. Rye and barley always have beards. Oats, like most of us here, are without any beard." Ben Tottle could be very bright at times, and Miss Wayland laughed at his allusion.

"Wheat sometimes has a beard and sometimes hasn't, but barley always has a stiff beard," he added.

"Of course you cut it with a razor," said Miss Wayland, archly, and all laughed at her wit, except Mr. Flipkin, who could see nothing to laugh at.

"Oh, no, Miss Wayland, they don't cut it with a razor. Allow me to correct you: they use a — a — what-d'ye-call-it," Mr. Flipkin said, trying to think of a sickle.

"No; we don't use a what-d'ye-call-it, but a cradle," said Ben, which set all the company into a roar.

"A cradle? How can you use a cradle? I thought cradles were for rocking babies to sleep."

Again there was a roar, louder than before, from the farmers, who enjoyed the stupidity of the young gentleman from New York.

"I suppose you can milk and do all sorts of things," Mr. Flipkin said to Mary Fielding.

"Oh, yes, most of us country girls know how to milk."

"And you have names for the cows, I suppose, — Lucy, Nancy, Ann Maria, and so on."

"Yes; father has one that we call Mary Jane, another we call Little Dolly. They are beautiful Jerseys."

"Why, I had no idea that you went clear down to New Jersey after cows."

"We don't. Ours came from Vermont."

"Then I should say that they were not New Jersey but Vermont cows," said Mr. Flipkin, which also caused a great deal of laughter.

Mr. Flipkin wondered if he had said any thing that was not exactly right, but as he could discover nothing, concluded that as it was Thanksgiving night everybody was bound to have a jolly time.

"Oh, by the way, talking about cows," he continued, "reminds me of what I said to our milkman one morning in New York. You know they bring round milk, cream, and buttermilk in big cans. I told the fellow that his cows gave poor buttermilk. He said that he would punch my head for my confounded impertinence, as he called it, whereupon I threw off my coat and told him to come on."

Mr. Flipkin was astonished at the peal of laughter that rang through the room. He looked from one to another, stroking the furze on his upper lip, utterly at a loss to comprehend the situation of affairs.

"I must have said something very funny, but I'll be blamed if I can tell what it is," he said; but no one enlightened him.

Returning to the parlor, they began the game of "Copenhagen."

Mr. Flipkin allowed himself to be brought into the fortress quite willingly, but the ladies were fleet enough to escape before he could take the customary toll. Moses was wary in

his endeavors to capture Miss Wayland, who kept a sharp eye on all his movements. Caleb found himself inside the fortress, and Miss Wayland, not being able to keep one eye on Moses and the other on himself, became his captive. Should he take that which belonged to him, — a kiss? He hesitated. She was from Boston. She was an heiress. She had moved in refined circles. Perhaps they never indulged in kisses on Beacon street. Perhaps the salutation would not be agreeable to her. Perhaps she would resent it if he attempted it. But she had entered into the game knowing the penalty if captured. Supposing he did not claim that which he had a right to claim, might she not think him wanting in manliness and courage? Moses, Flipkin and everybody else would not think quite so well of him if he showed the white feather. He was sure that Moses would give a great deal to be in his shoes at that instant. He looked into Miss Wayland's eyes and scanned the smile upon her face. There was nothing there to frighten him; there was no shrinking from him, and her hand rested willingly in his. How soft! how delicate! The game had ceased, and all were looking to see what he would do. He touched his lips to her fair cheek and led her gracefully into the ring, amid the clapping of hands and murmurs of applause. It was like the triumphal entry of a prince and his lady-love to the capitol of a kingdom. Ah, that kiss! Its fragrance was like wine of the rarest vintage, like the perfume of the rose and lily, — inexpressibly sweet. But to Moses it was sour wine spiced with wormwood!

When "Copenhagen" began to lose its charms, they had "Blind Man's Buff." What fun in escaping the blind man! darting into corners, crouching beneath the table, dodging under his arms, or stepping lightly behind him!

Then they had apples and nuts, and philopened each other; counted the seeds of the apples, and went over the charming ditty, —

"One I love, two I love, three I love I say,
Four I love with all my heart,
Five I cast away."

The games went on till the hands of the clock swung past midnight, and yet they were not weary.

"*Tempus fugit*," said Moses, forgetting the rebuke which Linda had given him.

"*Inter strepit anser olores*." It was Job who gave utterance to the words. All were amazed, Moses most of all. They did not know that he had been sitting up till midnight studying Latin after working hard through the days upon his father's farm.

"Please put it into English for us," said Linda, who saw an unusual light in Job's eyes.

"Oh, I was only repeating a line that I came upon in Virgil this morning: that a goose gabbles among swans, just as I am doing."

Miss Wayland gazed with admiration upon him, as if enjoying the sharp thrust he had given to Moses, who turned very red in the face, fingered his watch chain, not making any reply.

The time had come for going home, and the young gentlemen soon came round to the door with their teams. Then there was a merry gingling of bells.

"How have you enjoyed yourself?" Caleb inquired of Bell, when they were seated in the sleigh.

"Pretty well."

"Isn't Miss Wayland nice?" Caleb asked.

"Of course you think so, seeing that you were the only one that got a chance to kiss her; but I was glad you did it, though, for it made Moses as mad as a March hare."

"I thought you liked Moses."

"No, I don't; I hate him, and I let him know to-night that I didn't care the snap of my finger for him."

There was a jingling of bells behind them, and now abreast of them. It was Moses and Miss Wayland. Moses chirruped to his horse, as if intending to pass them.

A tightening of the reins and a cluck of the tongue was sufficient to put new life into the fleet-footed animal that Caleb had in hand. The street was wide, the path smooth and well trodden. The full moon was high in the heavens, flooding hill and valley, so that Caleb could see every movement made by Moses.

Side by side they went, the bells merrily jingling, the horses catching the spirit of their drivers.

"Don't let him go by," said Bell.

"He can't do it," Caleb replied, knowing very well what each horse could do. He was holding his own at a steady pace. Moses struck his with the whip, and the horse, breaking into a gallop, leaped ahead.

"Oh, don't let him! don't!" said Bell, reaching forward to take the whip from its socket to lash Caleb's horse into a run. Caleb restrained her, gave a low hiss, and his steed, without losing its gait, closed the gap. On they flew, down a gentle descent, and up the hill beyond, side by side.

"Hi-yah!" shouted Moses, and again his horse leaped ahead.

"Oh, don't let him beat! don't! Run into him! Capsize him! Do any thing!" said Bell, ready to cry with vexation.

Caleb saw that Moses intended to crowd him into the ditch, and he didn't intend to go there. He had not used his whip, but now he touched the flank of the animal, and once more they were abreast, and so near together that Bell could have laid her hand on Moses' shoulder.

"I guess we will say good-night to them," said Caleb

in a low voice to Bell, and he gave a louder hiss than before. His horse knew what it meant, and shot away as if all that he had been doing was only his ordinary speed. He not only took the lead, but the centre of the road.

Bell turned round and laughed in Moses' face. She saw him standing up in the sleigh, whipping his horse. The animal sprang from the road and ran upon a bank. There was a crash, and Moses and Miss Wayland and the buffalo robes were in the snow. The horse with the sleigh dashed past them. Caleb reined in his own horse, turned about, and rode back.

"Are you hurt?" was the anxious question.

"Oh, no; only a little frightened," said Miss Wayland.

"We will take you home to Mr. Fielding's," said Caleb jumping out, handing her in, and picking up the robes and blankets. Moses declined to ride, as it was but a few steps from where the accident occurred to his home. The runaway had turned into Mr. Meek's door-yard.

"Good-by," said Bell triumphantly to Moses, as they started away.

"Good-evening, Mr. Meek. I am very sorry for the accident, but am glad we were neither of us injured, and hope you will find your horse and sleigh all right," said Miss Wayland.

Moses made no reply, but bowed stiffly as they rode away. He went to the shed where the animal was standing, and kicked him vigorously. His first impulse was to jump into the sleigh, overtake Caleb, and carry Miss Wayland to Mr. Fielding's, where she was stopping; but so much time had passed, and they were so far away, that he concluded it was not best to attempt it. Besides, perhaps Miss Wayland would not care to trust herself with him after what had happened. He was chagrined. He had

not enjoyed the party: things had gone against him. Bell had snubbed him; the young farmers had turned up their noses at his swallow-tailed coat and kid gloves; Linda had rebuked him; Job had taken the starch out of him for quoting Latin; Caleb had won the only kiss from Miss Wayland, had beaten him in the race, and was now going home with her. The mortification was bitter. He seized the whip, applied it furiously to the horse, giving vent to his wrath by swearing all the oaths he could think of. The animal — nobler than the master — cringed till cringing brought no relief; then letting his heels fly, kicked the sleigh into kindling wood, seized Moses by the arm with his teeth, and ground the flesh to a jelly. Moses dropped the whip, sat down, and roared with pain, till John, the man-of-all-work, hearing him, hopped out of bed, came and helped him into the house, bandaged his arm, wet it with camphor, and helped him up stairs and into bed, leaving him to groan while he cared for the horse.

"I am sorry you tipped over, on your account, but I ain't a bit sorry on Moses' account," said Bell to Miss Wayland.

"I am sorry it happened, for it must be a mortification to Mr. Meek," Miss Wayland replied.

"He ought to be mortified, for talking Latin to us. I was glad when Job took him down," said Bell.

"How beautifully the moonlight falls on the hills and valley, and how white the snow," said Miss Wayland, changing the subject.

"Yes, the crust makes every thing look like wedding-cake," Bell replied, with no sign of vexation in her voice and the old smile on her face. She delighted to turn sentiment into jest. But they were at her house.

"I am ever so much obliged to you for carrying me, Caleb," said Bell, and then whispered in his ear,—

"I am glad you have come it over Moses so nicely."

Caleb could but reflect upon the situation of affairs as he drove on. There he was, going home with Moses' lady. How strangely things had come round!

"What a beautiful evening!" Miss Wayland exclaimed, breaking the silence.

"Very," he replied.

"Please don't hurry, Mr. Krinkle. I want to enjoy it," and the horse, as if understanding what she had said, dropped into a walk.

"O Mr. Krinkle, that day of last spring in the sugar orchard and when we flew down the hill on the sled like the wind, and this night, I shall ever recall with the greatest pleasure. I have always lived in Boston, and we know nothing of such enjoyment there. 'Propriety,' 'What will folks say?' 'It isn't genteel,' — those are the rules that govern us in the city, but here you go in for a good time."

"Yes; I think we do have pretty good times, even if it is an out-of-the-way place."

"I shall have to thank you for this evening's pleasure, Mr. Krinkle; if you had not invited Mr. Meek and his friends to come over to the sugar party, I should not have been there, of course, nor should I have had this moonlight ride. I am just about as happy as I can be." She broke out into a clear song, and sang a strain that came back to them from the other side of the valley.

"There is a rude girl over on the hill mocking me," she said.

"Let us rather think it is an angel taking up the song," Caleb replied.

"Oh, no. Please do not flatter. An angel never would listen to any song of mine. I am not good enough. They would listen to Linda, she is so good. I loved her the

moment I made her acquaintance last spring, and now that I have seen more of her I love her better than ever."

"I think a great deal of Linda. You know if it hadn't been for her I shouldn't be riding with you here to-night."

"That is so. I do not wonder that you think a great deal of her," said Miss Wayland thoughtfully.

They were approaching Mr. Fielding's house.

"Can we not ride awhile? I don't feel like going in," she said.

"Oh, yes; if you would like we will take a turn down the road."

Instead of driving on to the house, Caleb turned into a road leading down the valley. They rode slowly beneath the over-arching elms, — bare now, but beautiful still, — with the meadows on either side white with the gleaming snow. Who should they presently meet but Job and Mary, coming home the other way!

"You have come a roundabout way," said Caleb.

"It is the best way on such a night as this. But how happens it that you two are out here?" Job asked. He laughed heartily when informed of what had happened.

Caleb turned about and followed Job to Mary's home.

"I thank you very, very much, Mr. Krinkle, for all the kindness you have shown me. Good-night," said Miss Wayland. The moonlight was falling on her face, and the wintry air had brought a bright glow upon her cheeks. Caleb thought her transcendently beautiful. He rode home in a thoughtful mood, quite well satisfied with the part he had played during the evening. His sleigh-bells were tinkling in the air, but more musical than the bells were those parting words, — "I thank you very, very much."

CHAPTER XVIII.

LINDA'S GIFT, AND HOW IT CAME.

THERE was no elixir in Dr. Mayweed's trunk that could give her strength; and the thin pale hand was growing thinner from week to week. Mrs. Krinkle knew that it was to be her last winter on earth. But with the going out of physical energy there came a quickening of the intellect and exaltation of the soul.

Many the talks between Caleb and his mother.

"My dear boy," she said, "I have not much to say to you as to how you shall live or what you shall do, when I am gone; you can be a blessing to the world or a curse. You can win honor, which is better than fame, by standing always for what is good and right and true. You may gather riches, but the fire will burn them, thieves will steal them, they will slip away when you least expect it, but the reward that will come to you in doing good will abide forever. Your conscience and an unfaltering trust in God will be an unfailing guide. I do not doubt that you will try to do what is right."

The thin pale hand rested on his brow, smoothed his hair, and wiped away his tears. In after years as he remembered the sweetness and tenderness of the act, he thought that so in the future life God's own hand would wipe away all tears from weeping eyes.

Although so near the heavenly world herself, Mrs. Krinkle did not forget that Caleb was on earth, and that the great battle of life was before him. She did not forget that it was a sore disappointment and trial to him to be kept at home while so many of his mates were at the academy. To make the time pleasant and profitable through the long winter evenings, she led him through a course of English literature. He did not then understand how he was lifted by it into a higher plane of life; it was in after years that the comprehension of the truth came to him, that what he had acquired was immeasurably superior to the knowledge he would have gained at the academy.

The snow was disappearing from the hills, the red buds of the maples were swelling in the sun, the violets were appearing in the meadows, when Mrs. Krinkle passed away. And the husband, while gazing as the men of Galilee gazed up into heaven whither she had gone, was not unmindful of the things of earth, and that his work was still here. Though his pillow was wet with many tears at night, there was the same stern resolve during the day that had characterized him through life, that had won the respect and honor of his fellowmen.

Caleb felt that there was one who could truly sympathize with him in his sorrow,—Linda. The sun was going down behind the western hills as he went up to the cottage. She was in the garden looking after the plants, that had been buried beneath the winter snows and were now sending up their early shoots. What a vision it was! Little Maid standing there, with the rays of the departing sun streaming around her! He thought of her as the old painters thought of the Madonna,—the centre of light and glory.

Tender her sympathy and wise her words, and when he went home, it was with a brave heart and a brighter

hope. As the angel strengthened Elijah, so Linda comforted him.

There came a warm and sunny day, and the stage was going north toward Millbrook. Peter Smart was driving, and Captain Krinkle was sitting by his side, on his way home from Boston, where he had been to collect old debts, and make sales of the lumber that would soon be on its way to market.

"I have been highly prospered this trip. I have collected some old bills that I had given up as of no account," said the Captain to Peter.

"Good for you, Cap'n," Peter responded; "for if there is anybody in this wide world that I want to see get on, after Peter Smart, it is yourself."

They were entering the village and the bell was welcoming them to dinner. Peter cracked his whip and the horses whirled them up to the hotel.

Captain Krinkle jumped down from the coach, and stepped into Mr. Meek's store, and passed into the counting-room.

"What's the news?" Mr. Meek asked, shaking hands with him.

"Nothing in particular, — only things are lively, business wide awake; bargained all my lumber, collected a lot of old bills, got the cash. I did your errands, — got the papers somewhere. Here they are," said the Captain, handing him a package. "I am ready to square up," he added.

"I haven't it here; it is at the house," Mr. Meek replied.

"Never mind; just give me a receipt or a memorandum. We'll fix it in the morning."

Mr. Meek wrote something on a slip of paper and handed it to the Captain, who put it into his coat pocket. Mr. Meek looked at the parcel a moment and then put it into the safe.

"It is a very warm day for the season of the year," said Mr. Meek, as the Captain was going out.

"Very, and I shouldn't be surprised if there were snow enough still left in the woods on the hills and mountains to raise the river. If it does rise, I shall take advantage of it to set my logs adrift," the Captain replied.

The afternoon was as warm as the forenoon had been. The farmers had commenced their spring work, and the horses, tugging at the plough in the field, panted in the heat, while the oxen paced slowly in the furrows, with their tongues hanging out of their mouths.

The snow that had been lying unseen in the forests disappeared almost in an hour before the heat of the sun. The rivulets became brooks, brooks rivers, and the great river itself a mighty torrent. When the people went to bed at night they said the water would be up on the interval in the morning. The morning came, and all Millbrook was astir. The water was not only upon the interval, but over the lowlands. Drift-wood, logs, brush, fences, boards, rails, haystacks, fragments of bridges, and mills were afloat. The torrent was wild and angry. The swirling waters swept onward like a race-horse in his strength and speed.

Some of Captain Krinkle's lumber had already broken loose, and was drifting away. The logs that lay upon the bank above all former floods were afloat. Men were tying them together with ropes, and fastening them to the trees. There was running to and fro and shouting among the workmen, for the waters were rising very fast, and whatever was to be done must be done quickly.

Caleb was there to do what he could. He was out upon the rafts, stepping from log to log, fastening a rope here and another there. The neighbors came to help. The old men stood upon the banks to see a mightier torrent than they had

ever seen before. The women came, and the children from school, and the teacher, too, for what child could study with such a commotion in the streets and such a wild, terrific scene so near at hand! The minister left his Sunday's sermon; Mr. Fair laid down his hammer; Mr. Meek left his ledger; Doctor Mayweed for the moment forgot his patients. The bridge was in danger, for the logs had lodged against the piers; and they were increasing in number and piling higher every moment. The people were afraid to cross it, for it was already trembling.

Captain Krinkle's property was vanishing before his eyes. There was a great pile of logs just above the bridge, another around the bend still farther up the river, and the rise had been so sudden and unexpected that very little could be done to save the lumber. The Captain had purchased all the ropes and cords in Mr. Meek's store, and the neighbors had brought all they could lay their hands upon, but the ropes were small and the current mighty, and the cords were no more than pack threads against it. Captain Krinkle was giving his directions. If others were excited, he was calm and collected. There was a sudden outcry: —

"A house! a house afloat!" The cry ran from lip to lip. "A house! a house!" There it was, coming round the bend, a small house, half submerged; its windows broken, its chimney crumbled. All eyes were turned towards it. And now a child's head appeared at the gable-window and two little arms were flung out into the air.

"A child! a child!" The cry ran out from a hundred voices.

"Where's the boat? the boat? the boat?"

Men, women and children shouted it. There it was, high and dry upon the bank, where it had been lying through the winter, with gaping seams upon its sides, — a sieve and nothing more.

"Oh, dear! dear! dear! Can't something be done? Isn't there some way of saving it? Oh, dear! dear!"

Women wrung their hands and cried. Men stood speechless, for they knew that they were powerless. They shook their heads. No swimmer could keep afloat in the ice-cold water amid such a rush and roar and sweep and swirl!

Round the bend it came. The strong man, the man whom everybody looked up to in town meeting, in society, in the legislature, the peacemaker, the one always to be trusted, the man whose property was vanishing away as the snow had gone from the hills, who had been stricken sorely by his late affliction, stood with form erect, and cool, calculating eye, surveying the scene. He forgot about his property. He paid no heed to Mrs. Gabberly, who was wringing her hands and crying, "Oh, dear! dear!" A rope was lying at his feet; quickly he picked it up.

"Come with me, Jonathan; you too, Mr. Fair; — no one else."

They were orders which everybody understood, decisive and inspiriting. Jonathan and Mr. Fair followed him as children follow a father. All others stayed where they were. They ran out upon the bridge, which trembled beneath them.

The house was almost there, and behind it was a great raft of logs that had broken away above. They were tumbling one against another. Fearful the scene.

Captain Krinkle stripped off his coat and threw it upon the bridge, gave one end of the rope to Jonathan and Mr. Fair, took the other in his hand, and was over the railing in a moment. Those who stood upon the shore saw him sliding down the pier and running out upon the logs piled against it. Nearer came the house, and the people now saw what Captain Krinkle had seen from the first, — that it would strike against the great heap of logs upon which he

was standing. They could see the child at the window and its arms flung out into the air.

Captain Krinkle was calculating where it would strike, and how it would surge off upon one side, or be sucked under and crushed like an egg shell beneath the timber. He ran out upon a log that sank beneath his weight, stepped upon another, a third, a fourth, as lightly as a child. A leap, and he is on the roof of the building, reaching his arms down to the window. He has the child in his hands. The house is toppling, whirling round, going under. Another leap over the logs, which sink beneath him, and he is at the pier tying the rope around the child.

The people on the shore see the child rise in the air.

"Quick!" It is the one word that comes to their ears from the brave man below them.

The child is over the railing in the arms of the blacksmith. There comes a mighty crash. The great raft that has been following the house has struck.

"*Run for your lives!*"

They hear the shout from the Captain. They see him motion the blacksmith and Jonathan toward the shore; see them running; see them leap upon the bank just as the great stringers part like pipe stems. The pier rises from its foundation. The bridge goes over upon its side into the foaming waters. The timbers roll and toss and fly into the air like straws blown by the wind. They see the brave man, cool and collected as ever, standing bareheaded on a log. He gives one look toward the shore, waves his hand to them, as they have seen him wave a farewell when starting on a journey. And now he gazes up into heaven. The log flies from beneath his feet and he sinks into the water. A moment they see him,

catch a glimpse of a hand stretched up toward the sunshine, and then the great mass of whirling timber rolls over the spot!

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

His memorial stone will need nothing more.

A cry of horror goes up from the shore. Hearts stand still, cheeks blanch, women weep, and men gaze awe-stricken into each other's faces. Their best friend gone.

"He hadn't an enemy in the world." That is their eulogy when they find voice to speak.

But the child! Whose is it? Whose? No one knew.

The little girl thus rescued was too much frightened to speak its name in the crowd of strange faces. It evidently was about three years of age, a timid, shrinking thing, with golden hair and hazel eyes.

"What is your name, dear? Tell us your name? Where did you live? Who was your father? Have you any mother?"

A dozen kind-hearted women asked the questions, but the child was speechless. Little Maid stooped and kissed her and smoothed the golden locks. It must have been the touch of her hand, or her smile, or the tender light from her loving eyes, or some intercommunion of spirit between them that we cannot comprehend, that won the trust and confidence of the child, who reached up her arms and clasped them around Little Maid's neck and nestled her face against her bosom.

Not for a moment would the child be separated from its new-found friend. Mothers tried to coax it to their arms, called it pet names, but in vain. Fruitless alike were all efforts to find out its name, or aught of its history, till Dan joined the group.

"Bless my soul! It is little Winifred!" said Dan, as he caught a glimpse of the golden curls.

"Winifred!" a dozen exclaimed.

"Her mother belongs in New York, and always comes early in the spring to spend the summer in a little cottage ten miles up stream."

"You know where it is, Mr. Meek. I've seen you up that way," said Dan, addressing Mr. Meek, who came up at the moment. He had been gazing at the spot where Captain Krinkle disappeared, and had not seen the child.

"Where what is?" he asked.

"The little cottage where the New York lady spends the summer, with an old negro and his wife to take care of her. Here is her little daughter Winifred," said Dan.

"Winifred!" Mr. Meek said it as if not quite comprehending, or as if the terrible disaster had dazed him for the moment. The people noticed that his cheeks were pale and that his lips quivered.

"Probably her mother is drowned and the old negro and his wife. I shouldn't wonder if the dam just above the house had broken away in the night and swept every thing before it," said Dan.

Mr. Meek said nothing, but walked away, and stood with his hands clasped upon his heart as he gazed upon the scene of the vicarious sacrifice.

Dan was right. The sudden rising of the flood had carried away the dam in the early morning, and the torrent came, sweeping fences, trees, house and barn before it. The old negro, his wife, and their mistress, in the darkness, the turmoil, the bewilderment, in the rush and roar, had perished, while Winifred, asleep amid it all, was borne away, thus to be rescued.

The sun was shining, but to Caleb it was midnight. He went away by himself, sat down upon the ground, covered his face with his hands, and bowed his head between his knees.

His friends, standing at a distance, themselves wept when they beheld his grief, and thought of the bereavement that had come to them all. The blacksmith alone went and sat down by his side.

"My dear boy," he said, laying his brawny hand on Caleb's shoulder, "the Lord needed him. He was great in life and great in death; and believe me, my son, the service your father can render there will be immeasurably greater than it could have been here."

With such words did he seek to comfort the stricken heart.

While Mr. Fair was thus engaged the neighbors were taking counsel together in regard to the future of the little waif which was nestling in Linda's arms.

"What shall we do with the child? I don't see but that she'll have to go to the poor-house," said Mrs. Gabberly.

"I shall take care of her," replied Linda, with decision.

"That is right," said her father; "she shall be our child till her friends come for her, and if they never come she shall be ours always."

So Little Maid, with the gift of God in her arms, went home rejoicing, not that such a great sorrow had come upon them all, but that with the sorrow there had come a joy.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW THINGS WERE TURNED TOPSY-TURVY.

WHAT a melting away it was! A great estate had disappeared in a night, the farm, the house, the adjoining buildings, the meadows, the uplands, outlying pastures, the sugar orchard, the blooded stock, — every thing that Captain Krinkle had possessed. There had been a magnificent estate; now there was nothing but debt: debt for the millions of feet of lumber that had been swept away, debt here, there, everywhere, — so much debt that everybody in Millbrook was amazed.

There was a debt of ten thousand dollars due Mr. Meek, secured by a mortgage on the farm. The appraisers looked at the property, ran their eyes over the columns of figures, and shook their heads. The debts would swallow up the assets.

Sad to think that all the labor of the winter, all the labor of by-gone years, all the reasonable expectations of profit on the lumber that had been cut, should so suddenly disappear; but saddest of all, to know that ten thousand dollars, enough to pay off the mortgage, was in Captain Krinkle's pocket when he went down beneath the surging flood.

He had just returned from Boston, and must have had the money in his pocket, for the cashier of the Tenth National Bank had cashed his checks the day before he left the city.

Now it had gone, and Caleb Krinkle was not only left alone in the world, but penniless.

People came from all the surrounding towns to attend the auction, for no such estate as Captain Krinkle's had ever before been brought to the hammer in the country. Some of the farmers wanted the blooded stock, others wanted his carts and oxen; women wanted the nice bedding and furniture. They fingered the teacups, handled the dresses which Mrs. Krinkle had worn, — left hanging in the presses; peeped into the drawers that contained her linen; opened her dressing-case and tried on the kid gloves that had once been upon her hands. Men tried on Captain Krinkle's boots, examined the soles, to see how much wear there was in them, and the seams, to be certain that the stitches had not started. They put on his coat, and asked their friends if it fitted; and his hat, to see if they could wear it. They chinked the teaspoons, to ascertain if they were solid silver, and the teakettle, to see if it was cracked; counted the dinner plates, to be sure that none were gone from the set; sniffed the jugs and bottles, to discover what had been in them; tasted of the jellies and sauces. Men and women alike roamed from the cellar to the attic, looking everywhere with prying eyes.

Caleb saw it all. He heard the jests of the auctioneer and the ribald laughter of the crowd. He saw the things that were endeared to him by innumerable associations go, one by one, till there was nothing left but empty rooms, — so desolate and lone that his own voice came back to him in a mocking echo.

It was over; the last article sold; the farm in the possession of Mr. Meek, who had bid it off for the amount of the mortgage and interest.

"Just about half what it is worth," said the auctioneer. But there was no one else at hand who had eleven thousand

dollars or more to spare, and so the fertile acres which Mr. Meek had often wished to obtain were at last in his possession.

Fatherless, motherless, homeless, penniless, Caleb stood on the threshold of life, a bright past behind him, and a future without a ray of light to dispel the gloom.

"Make my house your home till you can look about you," said Mr. Makepeace.

"Come with me, White Hair," said Dan. "Our house is small, but there is room for you. Mother and I have talked it all over, and she said, 'Bring him by all means. We have put up a bed for you at one end of the garret, where your nose will be within six inches of the shingles, and where you can hear the music of the rain on the roof. We shall have something to eat to-day, to-morrow, and next day. Now don't say a word about it, but just come right along."

Caleb could not refuse such an invitation, and taking his bundle of clothes in his hand, — all that the flood had left him of the great estate, — taking one last glance of the chamber where he had always slept, at the sitting-room, where for a moment all the past swept over him with its tender associations, he went out of the door, turned the key in the lock, and gave it to Mr. Meek, who was standing on the steps.

"Thank you," said Mr. Meek, bowing graciously as he always bowed.

With a great effort Caleb kept back the tears. It was in his heart to say, "I hope life will be as pleasant to you here as it has been to me," but he could not speak the words. He bowed in return, and passed on to join Dan, who was waiting for him by the gate.

As Dan had said, it was a small house in which he and

his mother lived. There was a kitchen, bed-room, and a small parlor on the ground floor, a narrow stairway leading to the attic, where Dan's bed stood at one end, and at the other the bed which they had put up for Caleb. Under the eaves were boxes and barrels, and a pile of old books and papers which Dan had picked from the rubbish that had found its way into his cart. It was a collection which would have gladdened the eyes of a bibliomaniac.

"I am glad you have come, Caleb. We will do the best we can to make you comfortable," said Mrs. Dishaway.

While lying awake at night, thinking over the change that had come to him, of the kindness of Dan and his mother in the hour of his great extremity, Caleb's eyes filled with tears, and he could but hope that the best blessings of Heaven would rest upon them forever.

The change that had taken place in Millbrook was the one topic of conversation at the hotel, the store, and everywhere else, on week-day and on Sunday.

"Did you ever see the like!" was Mrs. Gabberly's exclamation to Miss Hyssop on Sunday noon, as they sat down in the church-yard to eat their lunch. The sods which a few weeks before had been laid upon Mrs. Krinkle's grave were springing fresh and green beneath the warm May sun, and the sight of them brought the subject vividly before Mrs. Gabberly.

"The ways of Providence are very, very mysterious," Miss Hyssop replied solemnly.

"That is just what my husband said. Who would have thought it! It beats all I ever did see; such a turning of things topsy-turvy. Mrs. Krinkle buried here, Captain Krinkle drowned, the property only paying the debts, Mr. Meek in possession of the farm, Caleb living with Dan

Dishaway, and all within a few weeks!" said Mrs. Gabberly.

"This is a world of change, and we don't know who'll be up or down to-morrow, and it stands us in hand to keep our lamps trimmed and burning," Miss Hyssop remarked.

"That is so. But what a coming down it has been for Caleb! I don't know as we ought to say in his case that pride goeth before destruction, but then I always thought he was a little stuck up. But dear me, that reminds me to ask if you have heard the news."

"What news?"

"Why, that Jonathan Jolly and Miss Gilliflower are going to be married right off."

"You don't say! Why, how long has that been going on?"

"I don't know. They have kept it mighty sly, though they say that Jonathan has had his eye on her this ever so long, and now that Captain Krinkle is dead, and he won't be wanted any more on the farm, they are going to hitch horses. They say he has bought a farm over t'other side of the river, and that Miss Gilliflower was buying her crockery and getting her fitting-out yesterday at Mr. Meek's."

"That is news, I declare. I wonder who will go next."

"That is just what I said to my husband. Says I to him, 'We may expect any day to hear that Miss Hyssop has popped off.'"

"Mrs. Gabberly!"

"Well, of course I didn't mean any thing by it, only it came so natural I couldn't help it."

Mrs. Gabberly had said truly. Jonathan had purchased a farm, and Miss Gilliflower was making preparations for housekeeping. When the next Sabbath afternoon came

round, Jonathan astonished all the congregation by walking up the broad aisle with Miss Gilliflower on his arm, while the minister stepped down from the pulpit, and stood on the platform in front of it, and joined them in the holy bonds of matrimony.

The people did not expect it; even Mrs. Gabberly had not got wind of what was going to happen on that particular Sunday, and was vexed with Jonathan and Miss Gilliflower that they had not given some indication of it.

When the services were over, there was a general shaking of hands in the porch, and hearty wishes were offered for the happiness of the newly married pair, and all went home rejoicing at what had happened. No, not every one, for Deborah was there, and saw the stalwart man and Miss Gilliflower pass up the aisle while the choir were singing the last hymn, and when she clasped her hand upon her side, no one mistrusted that it was to still the throbbing of her heart. As a ship founders at sea, so had her hope of life gone down, — one plunge and all was over. If she wept, no one saw the tears; they were shed in secret. No one ever knew that she was carrying a sorrow, not even her most intimate friends, and so her subsequent course of action was a mystery.

Now that Deborah was without a home, Mr. Jacob Nubbin thought it a good time to offer her one. Perhaps the marriage of Jonathan and Miss Gilliflower may have stimulated him, for if suicides and murders sometimes become epidemic, why not marriages? Mr. Nubbin had become quite regular in his attendance at meeting, not only at the day service, but at the prayer-meeting in the evening, and Deacon Goodman rejoiced in spirit when he saw such hopeful indications in Mr. Nubbin.

There came a night when Jacob seemed to be unusually

interested. He did not fall asleep during the prayers. He did not gap even, but sat with his eyes wide open, which was another hopeful sign to the Deacon. When the meeting was over, Mr. Nubbin, instead of hurrying home, loitered by the door.

"I s'pose you've no objection to my seeing you home, Debby," he said, as she came out of the vestry.

Love delights in pet names, and young men and maidens, bachelors and spinsters, husbands and wives, for that matter, do not always consider whether the names are soft or silly; it is sufficient that they are sweet and tender. Debby was sweeter than Deborah, in Mr. Nubbin's estimation.

"Thank you," said Deborah, taking his arm.

"It makes me feel real good to go with ye, only you haven't got no home now."

"No, I haven't."

"That's just what I've been thinking of, and I thought I'd ask ye if ye didn't want one."

"I shall have no difficulty in finding one; there are lots of folks that want me to work for them."

"But working out ain't like having a home, is it? Now, see here, Debby, I set lots by you. I've watched ye ever so many times when ye didn't know it, and I've said to myself for ever so long, 'I want Debby to be Mrs. Nubbin.'"

He waited a moment for her to reply, but she was silent.

"Ye see I am kinder lonesome up in the old house. Marm is dead now. I've been doing my own cooking, and I don't like it. I wish you would come and do it for me. There won't be only us two. All the money we get we can

have. I've got some now, and with you to help, I'll get a lot more, and you shall have some of it."

"I haven't anybody but myself to look after, and I guess I can get along," Deborah replied.

"Yes, I 'spect you can ; but I love you, Debby. I'll buy you a bran-fire new dress, and I'll get lots of things. There's a bushel or more of rags up stairs in the garret, and you shall have 'em to do just what you are a mind to with 'em. You may buy a new skimmer, or coffee-pot, or any thing else, when Dan Dishaway comes round."

Dan Dishaway! Deborah thought of the evening when he said, "I worship the ground you walk on and always shall," but she had refused him. Perhaps it would have been better not to have said, "I cannot be your wife," but who would have thought that Jonathan would go and take up with Miss Gilliflower? If she refused Jacob's offer now, what could she hope for in the future? Perhaps she could learn to love him, although he was twenty years older than herself, and would be an old gray-haired man when she was in her prime! He was frosty now about the temples, and the white hairs were showing themselves in his whiskers. Did not young girls in New York and Boston marry old men, especially when they had houses and lands and money in the bank? If they could learn to love old men, why could not she? If they lived happily with a husband old enough to be their father or grandfather, why could not she? With so much money as Jacob had laid away, she would be able to have all the dresses she wanted, a new bonnet every spring and fall, and every thing else to make her comfortable. Although Jacob wasn't very handsome, yet with a new broadcloth frock coat and pantaloons, with his whiskers trimmed and hair combed, he would be quite good-looking, even if his upper

teeth did jut over his under ones. Who could tell what he would be in the future, now that he went to meeting regularly? And perhaps she could be the means of bringing him up to a higher position. Wouldn't it be worth while to marry him for the sake of making him what he might be? So the thoughts came crowding upon her, all started by the mention of Dan Dishaway's name.

"Say, Debby, won't you come and live with me? If ye only will, we'll make things hum, I tell you. It ain't every gal that I would ax, but I've sot my heart on getting you. I have, jest as sure as you're alive."

Had set his heart on getting her! Then he must love her. What if she did not love him now, perhaps it would be all right in the end.

Woman's actions at times are wholly unaccountable, — not to be explained by any desires to be gratified or ends to be accomplished. Anger, jealousy, hate, resentment, revenge, singly or altogether, may impel human actions. Deborah just then was not moved by passion; possibly there was just a little feeling of resentment at the course Jonathan had taken, but he never had dallied with her affections, and how could she be angry? She could not say that he had been aught but manly in all his acts, and she would have resented any imputation to the contrary. He had only turned away from her and married Miss Gilliflower. But she was in no mood to listen to whatever reason or conscience might have to say, and so upset the fine theories of mental and moral philosophers, that every human action has its corresponding motive, or, if she did not upset them, made such a muddle of them that Sir William Hamilton, Herbert Spencer, and John Stuart Mill would not be able to say what was what in regard to it.

The people of Millbrook could not understand it then,

nor have they been able since to see how it ever came about that Deborah became Mrs. Jacob Nubbin. But she is not the only woman in the world who has bitten her own nose off for she knew not what; who has done it in haste and repented at leisure.

CHAPTER XX.

LOVE THAT CAN WAIT.

WHAT to do, is a perplexing question to all of us at times. It confronted Caleb.

"What would you do if you were in my place?" he said to Dan, his friend and comforter, knowing that he was clear-headed, and a close observer of men and things.

"Well, White Hair, let us turn it over a little. What do you want to do?"

"I want to take hold of something that is light and easy."

"Yes; that is natural. Light and easy is what we all want. I take it that you want to be a man, — I don't mean twenty-one years of age, for that don't make a fellow a man by a long chalk; but you want all the qualities that go to make up just such a man as your father was."

"Yes; I should like to be such a man as he was."

"Well, my opinion is that Light and Easy — and I guess that we had better add Respectable and Profitable, for I have noticed that folks who want to do light and easy things, want them to be respectable and profitable at the same time — don't make that class of men. It is hard work that makes men, provided there is the right sort of stuff in 'em to begin with. There are lots of the Light and Easy sort in the world who are waiting for something respecta-

ble and profitable to come along, just as a man once sat down on the bank of a river and waited to have it get done running, so that he could cross without wetting his feet. He didn't cross, did he? No more will these light and easy fellows who are waiting for something respectable and profitable. Any thing is respectable that is honest. Honest sweat is always respectable. Some things may not be quite so nice and clean and inviting, and not quite so much to our taste, as others, but if a thing is honest it is respectable. Now my picking up rags and pelts and odds and ends ain't very elevating, I know, but it is honest; just as honest as Meek's selling calico, cheese, cattle, or any thing else; just as honest — I shouldn't wonder if it was a little more so — as the making of pleas in court by the lawyers, and equally respectable. You have got to get your bread: that is the first point; stick a pin there. I have told you that this is to be your home till you can get started; you are welcome, and you always will be welcome, to such as we have. It ain't much, but it is better than nothing. It would be pleasant to have you here, but you can't afford to remain. You have got to dive at something, just as I made a dive for you in the pond. Your manhood lies out in the future; you can't see it, don't know just where it lies, but it is there, and you have got to do the best you can to get it. Second point: you've got to make a start. Now when I want to get to a place and can't take the best road, I put up with the next best; and so if you can't do as you want to, do as you can. If you can't hold a plough, maybe you can drive a team; if you can't get a team to drive, maybe you can shovel dirt. But it don't follow that you have got to do either. Now let us see what you are fit for. You've a good common school education. You can write and cipher, and know

enough to do business. You've good health and pluck and better than all the rest, principle. There's where I'm going to bet on you, White Hair. Principle is like the balance wheel in the engine, — it keeps the whole machine steady. There are ever so many fellows — young chaps, and old, too, for that matter — who have energy and pluck and every thing of that sort to send 'em ahead, but the first thing you know they are off on some wild goose chase or other because they haven't any balance wheel. Now perhaps you think I'm preaching to you, White Hair?"

"Oh, no, Dan," Caleb replied, greatly interested in the observations of his philosophic friend.

"Well, White Hair, preaching is good, but practice is better. When you come to that, just look at mother; her life is one grand sermon from beginning to end."

Dan took a piece of paper from his wallet, yellowed and worn by long carrying, and handed it to Caleb.

"There, White Hair, that is what she wrote off for me when I first began to buy rags and sheep skins, and I've tried to live by it." Caleb took the paper and read: —

Strict integrity.
Firm purpose.
Constant endeavor.
Patient waiting.
Trust in God.

"Her life, White Hair, has been a sermon, and those are the heads of it. They are good points to go by. I reckon that if you put them with your pluck, energy, good health, and the example of your father, and the teachings of your mother, that you will win. Adopt them, my boy, and then strike out, and God bless you."

Men with the appendage of LL. D. or D. D. to their names, and considered competent to doctor law or divin-

ity, might have had more method in philosophizing, but they could not have produced, in a whole treatise, any thing more cheering and encouraging to Caleb than the talk which Dan had given.

"Thank you, Dan. I will strike out. I can't stay here in Millbrook."

Why could he not stay there? The farmers would give him employment; he could work in haying and harvest; he could drive a team, hold a plough, or swing the scythe; there were friends who would sympathize with him, and who would give him a lift now and then, but he recalled an old proverb that when the tree is falling all run with their hatchets. He had already seen enough of human nature to know that there are some in every community who seem to take delight in cutting the fallen tree into fire-wood, and in chipping out character with their little hatchets. Strangers, sometimes, are more friendly than friends.

It would be far better to go out into the world and meet whatever difficulties he might encounter, and overcome them, or go down in the battle even, than to stay where he would be hourly reminded of the change that had come to him. Cockle boats creep along the shore, but gallant ships sail over the ocean. Better to spread the sails and strike out for lands beyond the sea, even with the risk of going to the bottom in a storm, than to be worm-eaten in the home port. Such were the reflections that came to him.

"I will go," he said to Dan.

It was spoken with a firm resolution, and having once said it, the question of what to do was settled. He would go quietly. He would not say good-by to anybody. None should know of his intention. None? Yes, one. He

could not go away without saying good-by to *her*. Perhaps he might never meet her again. In days past he had felt a tender regard for Linda. She was poor, but with thousands of dollars in prospect, he had drawn a bright picture of the future, in which she was a central figure, filling his life with happiness. That day-dream had passed away, and there was nothing but uncertainty before him. As sailed the voyagers of old, they knew not whither, in search of undiscovered lands, so he was going out in search of manhood, fortune, ease, comfort, joy and happiness, and if he found them he would come back and pour them out at her feet, that her life might be beautiful forever. But the years would be long, the way weary, the changes many. Would she await his return? Would she accept his gifts when he brought them? Would she not then be beyond his reach, filling another's home with sunshine by her presence? Be it as it might, he could not go without saying good-by to her. He must look once more upon her fair brow, and gaze into her earnest eyes; must hear again the sweet melody of her voice.

The evening was calm, and the stars shining from an unclouded sky, when Caleb ascended the hill to bid her good-by. Linda was standing beneath the porch. She saw him, and met him at the gate.

"Good-evening, Caleb," she said, opening it for him. She had been looking down upon the deserted house, with its closed blinds, as the shadows were settling upon the valley, and was thinking of the night that had settled upon him, — wishing that she could do something to cheer him. They walked up the path hand in hand, as they had many times in childhood, and passed into the pleasant sitting-room.

"How do you do, Caleb?" said Mr. Fair. The grip

of his brawny hand was always hearty, but heartier at that moment, Caleb thought, than he had ever known it.

"I am glad you have dropped in," he continued. "for I have had a letter come to-day through the post office, and I don't know what to make of it. I don't have many letters, for nobody outside of Millbrook knows me, except the teamsters from up country, who have their horses shod now and then. It is mailed at Boston, and is about Winifred. There is a one hundred dollar bill in it for her. And what is stranger than all, there isn't any signature to the letter, — nothing to tell who it came from. It's all a puzzle. I wanted to talk it over with somebody, and was trying to think who it was best to go to, and had about made up my mind to go and see either Mr. Meek, Lawyer Makepeace, or you."

"Why me?" Caleb asked with surprise.

"Because you are in a sense a party in this wonderful come-about of things, seeing that your father went home to heaven, and all your prospects in life were changed, in connection with Winifred's rescue; but more than that, I think that you have got good common sense, and can keep a thing to yourself. I wouldn't like to have the whole town know about this letter, especially Mrs. Gabberly, for then everybody would know all there is in it and a great deal more. If I wanted to make out a deed, I would simply say, 'Know Mrs. Gabberly by these presents,' for then all hands would know it."

Caleb and Linda laughed. Mr. Fair continued: —

"No; I don't want the town to know it, and I am sure nobody will hear it from you."

"I hope I shall be able to show that I am worthy of your confidence."

"I don't want you to consult with Mr. Meek in regard to it, father," said Linda.

"Why not, my dear?"

"Because I don't like him."

"Why don't you like him?"

"Because I don't."

"Ha, ha! a woman's reason," he said, patting her playfully on the shoulder.

"I can't tell you why I don't like him, but I don't. I haven't any confidence in him."

"What can have put it into your noddle to distrust him? There isn't a man in society, since Caleb's father was taken away, who gives so liberally to support the gospel."

"I don't know what has put it into my head, but I haven't any confidence in him, and I do hope you won't counsel with him about Winifred. She is *my* child, father."

"So she is, Puss, and if you don't want me to, I won't say a word to Mr. Meek."

"Thank you, father; I think that we can devise some way to dispose of the matter. If we only knew who the letter came from we would send it back."

"Isn't there any thing in the letter which will give a clew as to who sent it?" Caleb asked.

"Nothing; but get the letter, Little Maid, so that White Hair can see for himself," said Mr. Fair.

Linda brought a light and the letter, and sat down by the side of Caleb while he read it.

It was a brief note on a half sheet; thus it read:—

"I have learned that in the recent freshet, a child, whose father and mother are supposed to have been drowned, is under your care and protection. I feel a deep interest in the little waif thus thrown into your arms, and the enclosed is sent for her benefit."

"What do you make of that, White Hair?" Mr. Fair asked, after Caleb had read it a second time.

Caleb looked at the writing some time before replying, as if weighing every word. At length he said, —

"Going at it after the manner of Mr. Makepeace, who always picks a thing to pieces, to see, as he says, what it is made of, I should say that there might be two theories. It may have been written by a very benevolent man, — one of the rich men of Boston, who has so much money that he don't know what to do with it, and who has heard of the matter, and who wants to do good in this way. Then there is the other theory, that he is in some way personally interested in Winifred. He feels a "deep interest" in her. That indicates something more than mere benevolence. It is a deep interest, — something more than common, — an interest so great that he sends a very liberal amount of money. And then he wants it spent for her benefit; not to remunerate you. Perhaps the writer didn't stop to weigh every word in the letter, but there is an undertone of selfishness in it, to my mind."

"Why, White Hair, you are equal to Mr. Makepeace in picking a thing to pieces. You'd better be a lawyer," said Mr. Fair.

"Then there is another thing," said Caleb, looking at the writing again. "If I am not mistaken, that is an assumed hand. It isn't an easy hand, but stiff and constrained and irregular. I can't but think it was written by somebody who wanted to cover himself up so closely that no clew would be obtained by his handwriting. I don't think a man acting from purely benevolent motives would carry his concealment so far. It would not be natural."

"No," said Linda, with beaming eyes, thinking the while that Mr. Makepeace could not have done better

"There is something strange about that writing. It seems as if I had seen something like it before, but when or where

I cannot remember," said Caleb. He looked at it again and again, but the glimmering memories, if they were memories, would not shape themselves into certainties.

"Well, what shall be done with the money?" Mr. Fair asked.

"I don't want a cent of it spent for Winifred," said Linda.

"Why not, my dear?"

"Because somebody will come along by and by and lay claim to her on that account, and I don't intend ever to give her up to anybody," she replied with decision.

"Of course we can't give her up only to her parents, and they, in all probability, are drowned.

"To keep anybody from having a shadow of a right on the ground of having supported her, I don't want to keep the money. I wish we could send it back," Linda repeated.

"But we can't, my love."

"What shall we do with it, then?" Father and daughter both looked at Caleb, to hear what he would say.

"I've been thinking that you might put it into the savings bank, in trust, for Winifred. It would be drawing interest. If you ever get a clew to the sender, you can return it; if you don't, it will be quite a sum when she grows up and becomes of age," said Caleb.

"That's so; and that's what we'll do with it. Don't you think we had better, Little Maid?"

"Yes, by all means," was the reply; and the thought uppermost in Linda's mind was what Dan had said to her about Caleb, — that his was an old head on young shoulders.

"Well, Caleb, I will leave you to talk the matter over with Little Maid. It is about time for me to be in bed," and the blacksmith knocked the ashes from his pipe. "I suppose young folks don't care to have the old ones round, any more than I did when I was of your age," he said, as he

rose to go. All I have to say is, be good children, and don't sit up too late."

Caleb appreciated the delicate sensibility of the dear good man, but he could not let him go till he had told him of his own plan.

"Thank you, Mr. Fair; but before you go I want to shake hands with you. I shall not see you again very soon. I am going away to-morrow."

"Going away!" exclaimed father and daughter.

"Yes, I hope to be away from Millbrook by sunrise."

"So soon?"

"Yes. I am going out into the world, I don't know where. I feel that there is something for me to do somewhere, and the quicker I find it the better for me. I cannot be here in the future what I have been. You know, Mr. Fair, that with some people circumstances make the man, rather than the man himself. I can already see and feel it. I have got to make my way in the world. I must get my education, and it is quite time I was about it. I shall start trusting to bring up somewhere."

"We shall miss you, Caleb, but you have the right of it. I'm glad you are going. It will be better for you in the end. You can do more somewhere else than you can here, and all I have to say is, come back to us when you can, do all the good you can, and God bless you," said the blacksmith, giving him a farewell shake of the hand. He took the candle from Little Maid and passed into his bedroom.

The moon, just past the full, appeared in the eastern horizon. Caleb and Linda both gazed upon it without speaking. But of the moon they were not thinking.

Painful the silence where we dare not open our lips for fear it may frighten away the hopes which sometimes hover like timid doves around us. They could hear the beating of their hearts in the stillness.

"Linda," he said, "you have not told me whether you are sorry or glad that I am going away."

"Both," was the faint reply.

"I don't understand you."

"My judgment tells me that it is best that you should go, for I can see that there are opportunities otherwheres for you far better than any you can have here, and yet I wish you could stay."

"Why would you like to have me remain here?" he asked.

"Oh, it is always a pleasure to have our friends with us, and we shall miss you very much. But you have not told me where you are going nor how long you intend to be gone."

"I don't know where I shall turn up, but should not wonder if it was in Boston."

"Will you be gone long?"

"I do not intend to come back till I have won a victory over adversity," he said with firmness.

"There are many temptations in the city, Caleb."

She turned her face toward him and raised her deep, earnest eyes to his. He understood the appeal that was in them, — an entreaty more expressive than any words could have been.

"I know, Linda, that you would say, 'Do not yield to the temptations that will beset you,' but you are so kind-hearted that you will not speak your thoughts, for fear of hurting my feelings. Please let us be frank with each other to-night, for we know not when we shall meet again." He took her hand in his, as he had taken it in childhood.

"I can believe that there are temptations in the city," he continued, "such as are hardly dreamed of here in this quiet place. I know that many a young man who has gone there, just as I am going, has yielded to them, — has made shipwreck of faith, and hope, and life itself, to the great grief of

his friends. I have thought it all over, and I think it best to go, notwithstanding. I go with a determined purpose to accomplish something in life, and I hope never to lose the respect of my friends or of myself. I mean at least that you shall never be ashamed of me."

He pressed the hand that rested in his, and felt the pressure returned. Ah! that electric thrill, filling his soul with ineffable delight. He had only come to look into her eyes once more, to hear the sweet melody of her voice; he might never see her again; or, if seeing her in the future years, she would be no longer Little Maid, but a woman, bearing perchance another name. Suddenly and unexpectedly there had come a supreme moment. As the moon in its glory and beauty had risen above the horizon, so a great hope had risen within him, and the future was radiant with light. He drew her gently toward him. Willingly her head rested on his bosom. There were no words of plighted faith, no promise to love and wait till death might absolve them, but thenceforth their love would be like the loves of the angels, — changeless and pure and eternal.

Sweet the fragrance of the flowers around them! The crickets chirped as they never had chirped before; the leaves of the maples were tremulous with joy. Words were spoken never to be forgotten. There were tears, — blissful tears. Then they sat in silence and dreamed of a radiant future. They walked arm in arm down the beaten path. The moonglade lying on the water of the pond below them was a pathway of light. Beneath it was the spot where on that sweet summer day his life so nearly ebbed away, but now, though they might be separated by time and distance, they were to be forever united in spirit.

"In God's good time I will come to you," he said.

"True love can wait for that time," was the tender reply.

So they parted.

CHAPTER XXI.

STRIKING OUT IN THE WORLD.

THE rays of the rising sun were streaming up the eastern sky when Caleb started.

"God bless you, my boy!" said Mrs. Dishaway, kissing him and wiping a tear from her eye.

"You will win, White Hair. I shall see you in your old home yet. Remember that courage is one-half of the battle and doing right the other half," said Dan, as they shook hands.

All the feathered tribe were astir before him, as if, having heard of his intended departure, they had unanimously agreed to wake early enough to bid him God-speed. They fluttered around him and sang to him from every tree. The great shaggy Newfoundland dog that kept watch over Mr. Blossom's premises, Bell's dog, Don Pedro, came out and licked his hand and trotted by his side, looking up into his face with his sympathetic eyes as if to say, "I wish I could go with you." The white curtains to Bell's windows were down; she was asleep.

"Good-by, Bell. Life will be sweet to you, but bitter to me," he said to himself as he passed on.

He had walked rapidly, to be beyond the village before the sun appeared, and now, as he stood upon the hill, he

turned to take a last look at the place where his life thus far had been passed. There was no dust on his feet to be shaken off against any individual; no curse, nor thought of hardness in his heart. Mr. Meek had not yet moved into the old house; the blinds were all shut, and there was no sign of life about the place. The elm beneath which he had played, which had been as a dear old friend, stood there in its beauty. He would not stop to think of the past. It was no time for day-dreams. He turned to look once more upon Linda's home, half concealed by the maples that surrounded it.

Blessed vision! The door opened and Linda came out, as if to greet the sun. She was strolling down the walk, gazing at the brightening dawn, — brightest dawn of all to her. Flowers had opened their petals during the night, and the air was laden with their perfume, but there had been a blossoming of flowers more fragrant than they. Hope, Faith and Love were blooming on this fragrant summer morn. At every step the world became more beautiful to her wondering eyes.

She could not see Caleb, did not know that he was gazing upon her from the distant hill, gazing till the tears blinded his eyes, gazing till she disappeared within the door; and then he turned away and left the past behind him.

During the day he came upon a man who was attempting to drive a herd of cattle, but the creatures were self-willed and chose to wander into by-ways and up cross-roads, greatly to the annoyance of the dust-begrimed, burly, red-nosed man with a grizzled beard, who was trying to urge them on. He had shouted himself hoarse, had run here and there till he was completely blown in the heat. The

herd was turning from the highway and the man was powerless to prevent them.

"Let me help you," said Caleb. He jumped over the fence, ran across the field, and turned them back again.

"Much obleeged to you, young man, much obleeged. You've done a good sarvice; the fac' is I'm pretty well tuckered out. I 'spected my boy to help me, but he's got the measles; had to stay at home; thought I'd try to get along alone; but the critters have acted as if the old Harry was in 'em, blamed if they haint."

"I am glad to be able to help you a little."

The drover explained that he must reach the railroad before midnight and get his herd upon the train; that he was several hours behind time, and was afraid that he could not accomplish it, and that if he failed he would be many dollars out of pocket.

"I will help you," said Caleb.

"Thank ye, and I'll make it all right with ye in the end."

With Caleb's help the drover was able to make up lost time, and to reach the railroad and get the cattle into the cars long before the train was due. When all was accomplished they went into Tankard's Tavern for supper.

"Young man, I don't know your name," said the drover, when the cattle were ready for transportation.

"Caleb Krinkle."

"Thankee; my name is Hyde; most folks call me Old Hyde. Let us get the cobwebs out of our throats and then we'll have some supper."

They entered the bar-room, occupied by rough-looking men smoking pipes and cigars.

"What will you have, Mr. Krinkle?—Tankard, set on your best."

The landlord stood behind the bar, ready to wait upon them.

"Thank you, Mr. Hyde, but I don't drink liquor."

"Don't drink! Oh, yes, take hold: rum, gin, brandy, whiskey, — what will you have?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Wal, I don't want to urge ye; but, Tankard, you'll drink? I don't want to drink alone; 'tain't sociable."

"Seeing it's you, I don't care if I do," said the landlord, who never declined an invitation to drink his own liquor when anybody else paid for it.

There was nothing in the sparkle of the cut-glass decanters or in the bright-colored fluids within them to tempt Caleb to drink a social glass with his new-made acquaintance, who had already engaged him to assist in looking after the cattle on the train to Cambridge and Brighton; but it was not easy to say no to the invitation under the circumstances, for Caleb looked upon him as a benefactor. He had said no, however, and felt stronger.

"Have a cigar, Mr. Krinkle?" asked the drover, when they had finished supper.

"No, I thank you; I don't smoke."

"Wal, I'll tell you what we will do; we'll have a game of poker while waiting for the train."

"I am much obliged for your invitation, but I do not play cards."

"Don't play cards! don't drink! don't smoke! Where have you been all your born days? It strikes me your eddication has been somewhat neglected," said Mr. Hyde; but he added soberly, "Wal, Mr. Krinkle, I respect ye for your principles, and all I have to say is, stick to 'em. Here's my hand; success to you."

"Thank you," Caleb replied, shaking hands with Mr. Hyde, who thereupon sat down to play with the loungers in the room. Caleb went out upon the piazza to enjoy the peaceful evening.

The whistle of the locomotive signalling the approach of the freight train at length broke the stillness of the night. The train stopped at the station; the cars containing the cattle were attached, and Caleb, seated in the caboose, found himself on the way to Boston, earning his passage by looking after the herd.

CHAPTER XXII.

CALLING UPON AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

IN Boston. A quarter of a million of people around him, and not one familiar face among them all. Caleb was in Mrs. Starvem's boarding-house. In the lady's parlor was a faded carpet, a demoralized sofa, chairs weak in the legs and with broken arms and disjointed backs, a cracked looking-glass in a tarnished gilt frame, while upon the mantle was an ornamental plaster dog with a broken nose, a plaster vase, containing plaster fruit, very red and green and yellow. Upon the walls were portraits of the Presidents of the United States, wearing buff vests and blue or crimson or plum-colored coats.

In the dining-room was a long table covered with a cloth, which might have served for an outline map of the Pacific Ocean; the Sandwich Islands being represented by coffee stains, the Fiji group by the drippings of gravy, and New Zealand by a daub of catchup.

Mrs. Starvem was a lady who had the faculty of making a very little go a great way. She understood the art of purchasing economical tenderloins for steak, — having the butcher cut it from the fore-quarter in the vicinity of the neck, instead of choosing it from the hind quarter. The difference in price was several cents per pound, but her boarders would never know there was the least difference

in the world in the meat itself. She understood the art of making a little butter last a long while, by purchasing old rather than new; and if, perchance, it was not quite sweet where it came in contact with the tub, the boarders would not spread it quite so thickly on their bread, and with butter at fifty cents a pound, every ounce saved would be two and one-half cents gained. If, on a hot summer evening, with no ice to keep it cool, the flies became smothered in the butter, the boarders would be reminded of that sinful abomination, the Slough of Despond, in which Bunyan's Christian was besmeared, and so while eating, might draw a moral lesson!

Caleb reflected that the wants of man are many and his needs few. He resolved to look after the needs, and give the wants the go-by till he could gratify them. He needed wholesome food. He accordingly bade farewell to Mrs. Starvem, secured a room in a loft over a store, bought a cot bed and clothes, a chair and table, a bowl and spoon, plate, knife and fork, obtained milk in the morning of the milkman, and rolls from the baker for breakfast and supper. Then he secured a position in an eating-house, where, by serving other people at noon, he could earn a good dinner. With one dollar a week for a room, and another for breakfast and supper, he satisfied his needs. Next he obtained a situation as paper-carrier; was up at four in the morning, and had his day's work about done before breakfast. He could earn enough before breakfast, with an hour at noon, to pay his expenses, and the remainder of the day he could give to study. The legal profession had a charm for him. It might be as dry as dust at times, but beneath all the mouldiness and dryness there was the element of justice,—the divine element, the attribute of Deity; the righting of wrong; the power to

lift the fallen, to bring down the proud, to combat evil, to bring in the good. To engage in such work would be a pleasure, though he knew that he would always be at a disadvantage, for want of the training that others secured at Harvard and Yale. But he also knew that method was the first requisite in disciplining the mind, and governed himself accordingly. The long morning walk in the fresh air gave a ruddy glow to his cheeks. From breakfast to noon were three and a half hours when the brain would be in full vigor. These hours he gave to the study of the profession he had chosen. No debts were accumulating; there would be no board-bills at the end of the month.

To be successful in his profession he must have a fund of general intelligence, and that he could obtain at the Public Library. In the evenings there were lectures and concerts, and the doors of the Young Men's Association were always open to him, where he was sure of finding something instructive and entertaining.

Mountain climbing is at the best wearisome business. Even with boon companions to cheer the way, we grow weary in the legs, and sometimes become faint-hearted; but how much greater the weariness and the discouragement, when, from the low plane of bare existence to the high altitudes of life, we attempt to climb alone with no sympathetic voice to break the solitude; no laugh nor cheer nor smile to raise our drooping spirits! But when Caleb's spirits were weakest, then he heard Dan's voice coming to him over all the hills and valleys,—

"Courage is one half the battle, and doing right the other."

Moses Meek was in Cambridge, enjoying the advantages of the University, with a score of professors, and all the

dead and living languages, science and culture, to help him on. These aids he could call around him as Dan called the bees from their hives or the birds from the trees, — at will. He had but to glance at a text-book to be master of it, and then he had abundant leisure to row upon Charles river, to drive upon the Avenue, to attend the Opera, to make the acquaintance of the actors and actresses in the city. With means supplied without stint by an indulgent father, who had marked out a great career for him, every want was gratified.

Caleb wished to know how Moses was getting on, and resolved to make a visit to Harvard on Class Day. It would be a pleasure to wander through the classic shades, even if he could not be a participant in the enjoyments of the hour.

He went in the horse-cars, which were filled with young ladies, talking of the "spreads" which their brothers, cousins and friends were to lay, and of the pleasure they would have in the dance upon the green.

"Harvard Square!" The conductor shouted it, and the young ladies left the car, passed through the gate, and walked toward the colleges. Caleb followed them, and stood upon enchanted ground. He beheld the time-honored buildings of a by-gone century, and the walls of the new Museum, with its treasures gathered from every corner of the globe, the Library, with the lore of ages within its walls, the new halls, — the homes of the students during their college life.

How thrilling to feel, as it were, in the passing breeze, all that time had preserved of the bliss of the ages! to hear in the whispering winds the melodious numbers once heard in the olive groves of Attica!

But ghosts come to our feasts, and pleasure, it is said, is

never separate from pain. A pang shot through him as he remembered the past. Never till that moment had he comprehended how much had been swept away when his father went down amid the crashing timbers into the whirling waters. Never till that moment had he seen, as in a lightning flash, the past with its glories, the future with all its possibilities, or comprehended how at centres of learning men sit down to banquets prepared for them by the great ones of all ages. True, he could read the Iliad and the Odyssey in his own room; but it was like nibbling bread and cheese in a corner by himself, instead of sitting at the festive board.

The scene was fascinating. Students, smartly dressed, carrying ivory-headed canes, were moving here and there across the grounds. Those who had no part to perform in the exercises of the day were sitting in their rooms, smoking their meerschaums, with their feet on the window-sills, or higher than their heads, as if to let the knowledge which had filtered through their brains down into their boots run back again! Young ladies with pink and blue ribbons fluttering in the breeze stood in groups here and there upon the lawn, chatting with their brothers and acquaintances. Negroes wearing white aprons, with hampers and baskets redolent with roast chicken and cranberry sauce, rum punch and ice cream, were hurrying into the halls. There was all the bustle and excitement of Class Day; interesting to one who never had seen it and to be enjoyed by those who took part in it; — a day ever to be remembered by those who were to win the honors.

Caleb strolled here and there, enraptured by the scene, entranced by the music and the joyfulness of all around him. While leisurely sauntering, he discovered Moses amid the throng, and was surprised to see the change that had taken

place in form and feature. He was tall. He was dignified in deportment. The red hair of his childhood had changed to auburn. There was a freshness in his complexion, heightened by the bright color upon his cheeks. He had all of the suavity and graciousness of his father in his intercourse with those around him. He was the centre of an animated group of young ladies. Caleb was not near enough to hear what he was saying, but concluded that there must have been some point to it, for the young ladies laughed immoderately. The group dispersed, and Moses, accompanied by a fellow student, came along the path.

"How do you do, Moses?" said Caleb to his old schoolmate. Moses stopped a moment to see who had spoken, but did not take the proffered hand. He saw Caleb and yet did not see him. He knew he was there, but looked through him into space. There was no bow or smile; no sign of recognition. He looked, and passed on as if he had seen nothing. The young gentlemen and ladies strolling on the lawn saw all that had transpired, — saw the erect form of Mr. Meek, who was going down the path, saw the young man who was not a collegian staring with fixed eyes, with surprise and wonder in every line of his face, the petrified statue of amazement.

Those who had seen it, laughed aloud and rehearsed it to their friends.

"Who was that fellow?" The question was asked by the young man accompanying Moses.

"An impudent puppy who used to go to school with me when we were boys. If he had spoken to me anywhere else, or on any other occasion, I would have knocked him down; but I didn't want to get up a row on Class Day, you know," was the reply that reached Caleb's ears.

"Of course not; but then you would have given him a good lesson," said the other.

Caleb passed out of the gate, shook the dust off his feet, and went up the street, reached the elm under which Washington drew his sword, and stood beneath it to cool the fever within him.

Were those the manners taught in College? It was Class Day, a jubilee day, and did not everybody in College expect to be congratulated by their friends? Perhaps if he had said, "How do you do, Mr. Meek?" it would have been a little more respectful, but aside from that, he could not see why Moses should have cut his acquaintance.

"So be it, my old friend. The world is wide; there is room for both of us. I will not quarrel with you." A philosophy learned not at Harvard, but in the school of adversity, enabled him to say it. All honor to him, who, under great provocation, can say it calmly as Caleb said it, without a curse attached to the words, and who can banish resentment from his heart.

Caleb wiped the perspiration from his forehead, stepped into a passing car, and went back to his solitary studies in his little room, while Moses led his fair partners, one by one, in the dance upon the green.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BERTHA'S FIRST APPEARANCE IN SOCIETY.

MRS. CODINGTON was giving a party, the grandest of the season, and there was a steady rumbling of carriage wheels over the pavements of Beacon street. It was a great party, a very select party. Distinguished men were among her guests. Judge Mandamus, General Pompon, Rev. Mr. Cassock, and Lord Bummer, who had just arrived from England, on his way west to the plains of Dakota, to try his hand in shooting buffaloes. Mrs. Codington considered herself fortunate in having this member of the English aristocracy among her guests, for the presence of Lord Bummer would make the party especially select.

A white-haired negro wearing a white vest, a white necktie, white kid gloves, and a black dress-coat, stood on the white marble floor of the vestibule and bowed to the guests as they entered the Codington mansion. Another white-haired negro, similarly attired, and deeply impressed with the importance of performing his part with becoming dignity on the grand occasion, stood at the top of the stairs and bowed to them.

"The gemmen will please turn to the right and de ladies will please turn to de lef," said this director of ceremonies.

The gentlemen, thereupon, passed into a chamber, de-

livered their coats and hats to another negro, then smoothed their hair, or brushed it up, adjusted their coats, fingered their collars, and bowed stiffly to their neighbors while putting on their gloves.

In another chamber the ladies were shaking out the folds of their skirts, adjusting ribbons, arranging flowers in their hair, turning before the pier-glass to see that plait, fold, ruffle and flounce, tassel, scarf and ribbon were as they should be.

Bertha Wayland was there. It was to be an eventful evening in her life. She was to make her appearance in society; to be no longer a girl, but a maiden. Up to this hour she had been only a chrysalis, but now she was to take wing and fly out into the sunshine of life, to flutter here and there at will in search of sweetness and pleasure.

Her school-days at Hilltown were over, and she had passed a year at Veneering Hall, on the banks of the Hudson, to receive the polish of a fashionable education in Miss Posey's institute. Mr. Wayland was no longer in the land of the living, and Aunt Janet had had her own way in the finishing of Bertha's education. On this eventful evening, Bertha stood before the pier-glass, — an angel in a cloud of white. Her dark hair lay in wavy folds above a clear, transparent brow. A bloom like that of the blush-rose rested on her cheeks, and there was such a blending of love, purity and goodness, and all heaven-born attributes, in her sweet, fair face, that had she lived in other days, an old master of art might have chosen her as his ideal of a Madonna. Her eyes were bright with the expectation of the hour. The orbs which at other times seemed to be looking far away, as if in search of something in the dim and shadowy distance, on this night were looking at things near at hand, as if after the long search she had found that which she had been so earnestly seeking.

With a fluttering heart and a light and airy step, a movement so graceful that those who were standing below might have looked up to see whether it were a mortal or a seraph from the celestial regions, Bertha, following Aunt Janet, descended the stairs. A pale-faced young man, with a light moustache, son of the hostess, with a rose in the lapel of his coat, gave her his arm and presented her to his father and mother. There was a confused hum of voices around her, but amid the general buzz she heard Mrs. Codington say, —

"I am delighted to see you. I consider it quite an honor to have you come out on this occasion." Then she said in a whisper, "How lovely you are! You are an angel."

So Bertha at last was in society, and no longer a chrysalis, but a butterfly. She passed on with Aunt Janet, and mingled with other seraphs, dressed in red, white and blue illusion. She knew that they were looking at her, and not merely looking, but staring, at her dress and the arrangement of her hair. The mothers of these celestial spirits were looking at her through their golden-bowed eye-glasses. Little driblets of speech reached Bertha's ears: —

"Makes a spread." "Probably expects to carry all before her." "Her face is as red as a poppy."

She knew that they were picking her to pieces, and she would gladly have shrunk away into some corner where she might be an observer without being seen; but she was in society, and must bear whatever criticism society might have to offer. As an offset to being torn to tatters, she heard others say, —

"How lovely!" "Isn't she beautiful?" "She will be a queen in society."

Aunt Janet discovered an old friend, Judge Mandamus, a portly man with a smooth face and gray hairs, — a dignified person, with an old-fashioned gold seal dangling from his watch chain.

"My dear, the Judge wishes to be presented to you on this night so eventful in your life," said Aunt Janet, introducing the Judge

"I consider it a privilege and an honor to be the first to take you by the hand on the occasion of your appearance in society. Your father was my chum at the academy."

"At Hilltown?" Bertha asked.

"Yes."

"Oh, how delightful! I attended school there," said Bertha with enthusiasm.

"Did you? Indeed! Then you are entitled to my special care and attention. I must take you under my wing to-night and try to be agreeable, instead of a cross old curmudgeon. Let us get into the library, where there is more room," he said, edging his way through the crowd, Bertha clinging to his arm with one hand and managing her trail with the other. The Judge unwittingly put his foot into a white lace fog. There was a starting of the stitches that bound it to the form of the celestial being who claimed it as her own.

"I beg your pardon," said he, bowing.

"Oh, it is of no consequence," was the reply. But as the Judge passed on, these words came to his ears, "What an old brute!"

From the recess of the bay-window in the library, where orange blossoms, passion-flowers, calla-lilies, heliotropes and exotics from the green-house were exhaling their fragrance, Bertha gazed upon the brilliant throng. It was a fascinating spectacle. The pictures on the walls, the festoons of flowers,

the rich costumes, the flashing diamonds, the animated faces, the bowing and courtesying, together with the confused hum of voices, and the swelling strains of the Orchestra stationed in an ante-room, all combined, thrilled her with an inexpressible pleasure.

Hon. Mr. Puttyman, Member of Congress, approached the Judge.

"Ah! my dear Judge, how do you do?"

"Quite well, I thank you. I hope you are well. Allow me to present you to Miss Wayland," said the Judge.

Hon. Mr. Puttyman had accomplished his object. He had sought out the Judge, not for the purpose of talking with him, but to make the acquaintance of the lovely creature by his side.

"It is a beautiful evening," the Member of Congress remarked.

"Very beautiful, Bertha replied.

"Mrs. Codington has a large party."

"I don't see how it could be much larger."

"It gives me pleasure to make your acquaintance, Miss Wayland. Of course you will visit Washington by and by, and I shall esteem it a privilege to present you to the President."

Mr. Puttyman was intending to say something more, but General Pompon had joined the Judge, and having shaken hands with him, begged the honor of an introduction to Miss Wayland. He also remarked that it was a beautiful evening, and that it was the largest and most brilliant party of the season, and was trying to think of some pretty sentiment, when his thoughts were put to flight by Rev. Mr. Cassock, who also begged of the Judge the honor of an introduction to Miss Wayland. Rev. Mr. Cassock was a young man with a pale face, whose chestnut hair, parted in the middle, lay in

luxuriant curls about his ears. Being near-sighted, he wore golden-bowed spectacles, which, with the paleness of his countenance and the manner of wearing his hair, gave him an effeminate appearance.

"It is a delightful evening, Miss Wayland."

"Very."

"Mrs. Codington has a very large gathering and a brilliant company." The reverend gentleman was going on to say something more, and General Pompon and Mr. Puttyman were waiting to put in a word, but could not find an opportunity, for Aunt Janet had made the acquaintance of Lord Bummer, and came up at the moment to introduce him.

My Lord Bummer was a gentleman in the prime of life, with a florid countenance, a moustache, sandy hair, and a cold gray eye. Aunt Janet had sought an introduction to my lord. She had ascertained that he was unmarried. She thought of the Porgie genealogical tree with old Sir Philip as its tap root. Perhaps something of consequence might happen to the Porgie family from this accidental meeting with Lord Bummer. She was confident that my lord could not find among the aristocracy of England a lady more beautiful than Bertha.

"Miss Wayland, Lord Bummer does you the honor of wishing for an introduction," said Aunt Janet, indulging in a little fiction.

His lordship bowed, and Bertha acknowledged the salutation.

"I feel myself greatly honored in making the haquaintance of such a lovely being," he said, bowing toward Bertha and towards Aunt Janet also, as if to indicate that the compliment was intended for both. "I 'ave been," he continued, "very much himpressed with the beauty of the ladies of Hamerica, it is so hangelic."

"You flatter us, I am sure. We may be good looking, but we are not angelic," Aunt Janet replied, pleased by his lordship's fine speech. "I dare say," she added, "that our best type of beauty in this country must be much below that of the noble families of old England."

"Please hallow me to differ from you, my dear madam. Even the daughters of the hearl of 'Astings, who is second cousin by marriage to my mother, are not more beautiful than some of the lovely beings I 'ave seen since my harrival in this country. I do not think that we should 'ave to go far to find one whose beauty would be the theme of praise at Buckingham or Windsor," said his lordship, with a slight inclination of his head toward Bertha.

"I suppose," he added, "that there will be some dancing during the hevening; shall I 'ave the 'onor of your 'and in the first dance, Miss Wayland?"

The request was so sudden and unexpected, that Bertha, who had hardly looked into Lord Bummer's face, knew not what to reply.

"Miss Wayland will be delighted to accept such an honor, I am sure. Will you not, my dear?" said Aunt Janet.

"Certainly, with pleasure," was Bertha's reply. Her heart was in a flutter. To dance with a lord! How could she ever get through with it in the presence of all the assembly!

"Thank you," said his lordship; and he turned away to make the acquaintance of other young ladies who were presented by their mammas.

The young gentlemen of the party, like small fish in the wake of great ones, through Aunt Janet, or Mrs. Codington, or Mr. Frederic Augustus Codington, — Miss Wayland's remote relation, — all paid their respects to Bertha. Mr. Frederic Augustus was a senior at Harvard, a chum of Mr. Moses Meek, jr., who also was a guest on this occasion. Mr. Meek

made his way through the throng, carefully picking his steps amid the trails that lay in wavy folds on the floor, bowing to the fair owners as if graciously saying "Pardon me," and so approached Bertha.

"What an unexpected pleasure is this!" Moses exclaimed.

"Why, Mr. Meek, I am very happy to see you," said Bertha.

"I had not thought of seeing you here," Moses replied.

"Our meeting is equally a surprise to me, yet if I had thought a moment I might have supposed you would be here, knowing that you were a classmate with Mr. Frederic at Cambridge," Bertha remarked.

"Time in his flight has bestowed upon you much more than he has taken away," said Moses, feeling that a little sentiment would be appropriate on the occasion.

"Time can never make amends for taking away my father," said Bertha sadly.

"But it has given you health, youth, beauty and a bright future. I bow before the queen of the hour," said Moses, smiling and bowing at the same moment.

"Oh, please don't. I do not like flattery," she said.

"That is what all the young ladies say, but I fancy they don't mean it."

"I mean what I say," Bertha replied, with a decision which convinced Moses that it would not be wise to give utterance to all the fine speeches he had in mind.

"Shall I have the honor of your hand in one of the dances after supper?"

"Of course I cannot refuse the request of my old schoolmate," said Bertha, as she entered his name on her list.

"I hope you are enjoying yourself on this occasion," Mr. Meek remarked.

"Yes, — but, after all, I don't think that it is so enjoyable

as that Thanksgiving party at Millbrook which we attended, you remember. There we were free, here we are constrained."

Miss Wayland was thinking of the remarks she had heard during the evening.

"By the way," she continued, "how are our old friends at Millbrook, — that sweet girl, Miss Fair, and Mr. Krinkle?"

"Mr. Krinkle is not there; he is in this city."

"In Boston?"

"Yes; and rather low down in the world: he is in an eating-saloon."

"You surprise me. I thought him an estimable young man, with a bright future before him," said Bertha, a shade of sadness settling on her face.

"There came a sudden change in his fortunes; his father was drowned during a great freshet, while attempting to save a little girl; all of his property was swept away, and Caleb was forced, of course, to step down from the position he had occupied. He is plodding along now in an eating-room, and he also carries out newspapers for a living. But you will be interested to hear that Linda is bringing up the little girl. The child's parents were drowned."

"Bringing up the little girl! What a good creature she is! Do you know that I fell in love with her the moment I saw her? And Mr. Krinkle tending an eating-saloon? How strange!"

"Truth is stranger than fiction, it is said."

"I am really sorry for him," said Miss Wayland.

Nothing had been left undone by Mrs. Codington to make the party the grandest of the season. To enlarge the premises, a pavilion had been erected in the back

yard. It was hung with flags and banners, and streamers were gathered in graceful folds beneath the canvas roof. Palms, palmettoes, acacias, and orange trees laden with golden fruit, were brought from the conservatories, and exotics from the green-houses, to lend their beauty and fragrance to the grand occasion. Chinese lanterns shimmered amid the mimic trees and shrubs. The caterer had prepared an entertainment for five hundred guests. Having had long experience, he knew almost to a certainty how many bushels of oysters on the shell would be needed; how many lemons to flavor them; how many lobsters and chickens must be chopped up for salad; how many beef tongues, cold roast chickens, gherkins of pickles and olives; how many pies, cakes; how many gallons of ice cream and rum punch; how many baskets of champagne; how many bottles of hock, claret and sherry, and how many gallons of coffee. In order that nothing might be wanting, the caterer had added a little more than the five hundred guests could possibly consume. Everybody ate till satisfied, and there was something for the most fastidious epicure. The chicken, the ices, the coffee, the sherry, hock, claret and champagne all were duly appreciated and praised.

It was a new sensation that Miss Wayland experienced, when, after supper, she went whirling around the room with Lord Bummer in the dance She had danced before in a quiet way, but now she was in society. True, Lord Bummer's breath was rather strong of champagne, and there was a musty smell to his whiskers, as if the smoke of his last cigar was still there. She did not quite like the searching look of his cold gray eyes resting on her necklace, but he was a lord, and she knew that the other young ladies were envying her the pleasure of the moment.

"What a charming hoccasion this is!" said his lordship, escorting his partner to Aunt Janet, when the dance was finished. "And hallow me to say, Miss Wayland, that I never found hamong my hacquaintances a more charming person than yourself to dance with."

"You flatter me," Bertha replied.

"Ho, no, Miss Wayland; I mean it."

Bertha picked at the flowers in her bouquet, not knowing what to say, seeing that the flatterer was a lord. A rose dropped at her feet, and Lord Bummer picked it up.

"Hexcuse me if I do not restore it to you. I shall wear it next me 'art in remembrance of this joyful hoccasion. May I hask you to pin it on my coat?"

Had it been Mr. Moses Meek, or even Mr. Frederic Augustus Codington, or any one else, she would have refused; but how could she refuse Lord Bummer, especially when Aunt Janet, who saw and heard the request, was encouraging her by significant looks to comply with it. She pinned it to the lapel of his coat and received his thanks.

The next dance was about to commence, and Mr. Puttyman, with whom she had an engagement, was bowing to her and offering her his arm. She took it, and the honorable gentleman moved away with dignity, taking no notice of my lord.

Miss Wayland's next engagement was with Moses Meek, jr. They talked of by-gone days at Hilltown and Millbrook.

"Do you know," said Bertha, "that the maple-sugar party and that Thanksgiving evening at Millbrook are two of the brightest pictures in my memory? That slide down the hill with your old playmate, Mr. Krinkle! Oh, it was just charming! Whenever I think of it I seem to be flying through the air, the fresh breeze fanning my cheeks.

And that evening party at Daisy Davenport's, — I really enjoyed more there than I have here this evening, although this is so grand an affair. And then that tip-over we had on our way home. I have laughed over it many times."

Moses wished that Miss Wayland would not call up such a ghost, and was glad to hear the opening strains of a waltz from the orchestra. The ghost was forgotten, however, as he went whirling round the room with her, to Strauss' air of the "Blue Danube."

The programme of dances was completed at length, and the guests took their departure. Bertha had the pleasure of being escorted to her carriage by Lord Bummer.

The clock on Park street church was striking four when she laid aside her ornaments and prepared to retire. The excitement of the evening had passed. She was in society, had partaken of the best pleasure that society had in store for her. It was pleasant to the taste, but, after all, her longings were not quite satisfied.

It was past noon when she awoke with an aching head and a sense of weariness. Breakfast at one o'clock in the afternoon was tasteless. The morning paper contained a notice of the "Fashionable party at the West End," in which the belle of the evening was spoken of as "The rich, beautiful and accomplished Miss B—— W——, who came out on the brilliant occasion." And then the Jenkins of the hour went on to describe her dress, her ornaments, her beauty, grace and brilliancy, and congratulated society upon such an accession to its ranks.

If it was pleasant thus to be noticed, Bertha could not say that it was altogether satisfying. She leaned back in her luxuriant arm-chair and gave herself up to dreaming. "Is life, after all, like the apples of Sodom? Is pleasure

never separate from disappointment? Is there no unadulterated happiness, — no gold without alloy?"

These were the questions that came to her, and she waited in vain for an answer.

It was time for her to be dressing for the afternoon, for Lord Bummer had appointed four o'clock as the hour when he would do himself the honor of calling upon her. Before starting for her chamber, Bertha glanced over the newspaper, and her eye fell upon a paragraph which arrested her attention. This was what she read: —

"The police have had information for some time past that one of the most adroit rogues and forgers of England had come to this country and was supposed to be in this city. They were fortunate enough to lay their hands upon him this morning as he was leaving a party at the West End, where he had appeared as Lord Bummer. He was arrested for counterfeiting, and is now safely lodged in Charles street jail."

Bertha threw the paper from her and covered her face with her hands, crying from shame and vexation.

"Why, what is the matter, child?" asked Aunt Janet, coming in at the moment.

"Read it," said Bertha, pointing to the paragraph.

"The wretch!" Aunt Janet could say no more, but crumpled the paper in her hands, and went to her room to hide her mortification.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LINDA'S BRAIN IN A WHIRL.

THE fire was out in the forge, and there was no one to rekindle it. The cheerful tink-tink-tink, the pleasant sound heard through the day in Millbrook, would be heard no more, for the blacksmith had finished his work, and was at rest forever.

Linda was in the bloom of maidenhood. Her cheeks were fair, and there was the flush upon them that comes from perfect health. Her face was so sunny that it seemed as if no cloud could ever settle upon it. Though regular her features, no one would have called her beautiful in the common acceptation of the term; but the earnestness, sweetness and goodness that had characterized her father's face, were her own distinguishing features. Now that her father had departed, her life was wholly devoted to Winifred. Linda was owner of the cottage, and there was a small amount of money in the savings bank, but more than that, she had inherited an earnest purpose and a resolute spirit.

"Come and live with me," she said to Mrs. Dishaway. "You are alone when Dan is gone, which is most of the time. There is room for you; there is a stall in the barn, where Dan can keep his horse. You will be nearer meeting on Sunday, and it will be better all round."

"How kind it is in you, Little Maid! It is not every girl that would want a woman as old as I am for company, or that would have thought of getting me a little nearer to meeting on Sunday, but it is just like you, and if Dan thinks it best we will come."

Dan thought well of the plan, and thanked Linda for the invitation.

"We will do what we can to make it pleasant for you," he said.

Linda was happy. She was earning her daily bread by making vests for Mr. Meek, who had engaged in the manufacture of clothing. She had health and strength and a troop of friends. Was there not one true heart in the world that was ever kept in remembrance? Were not the words ringing in her ears,—sweetest words ever spoken,—"In God's good time I will come to you"? And when she read the letters that came from Caleb, was not her joy inexpressible? Could she not see the beautiful manhood that was growing up within him, making him a worthy son of a noble father?

Notwithstanding this, she found some troubles besetting her pathway. Mr. Felloe, the wagon-maker, who had lost his wife, was anxious to have her fill the aching void in his heart, which he felt was big enough, heart and void alike, to take in Linda and Winifred together. He would be a husband to Linda and a father to little Golden Locks, as everybody called Winifred.

Mrs. Gabberly noticed that Mr. Felloe was in the habit of calling at the cottage, and concluded that as he was a widower there must be something in the wind, and so went up to the cottage to see what it might be.

"According to all accounts, Linda, you'll be changing your name pretty soon," she said, opening fire.

"Indeed!" Linda replied, divining by her quick perception what her visitor was driving at, and willing to lead her on.

"Well, I am glad of it, for my part. He is a real good man. True, you'll be a second wife, but then some men think a heap more of the second one than they do of the first. And so he's going to adopt Winifred! Of course he would have to if he took you. Well, that will be nice all round."

"I don't quite understand you," said Linda.

"Oh, no, of course not! It is no use for you to deny that he's been here again and again. I've seen him creeping up here with his best bib and tucker on after dark. You can't pull the wool over my eyes. I'm too keen for that."

"To whom do you refer?"

"That is just like you girls, — make believe you don't know. I did just so when Mr. Gabberly was beginning to court me, — it's natural; but it is that Felloe," and Mrs. Gabberly laughed at the pun.

"Seeing that you take a great deal of interest in my affairs, Mrs. Gabberly, I will say that I am very well contented with my lot in life, and do not propose to change it at present."

"Don't propose to change it? Don't intend to accept Mr. Felloe's offer? You astonish me! He is the best catch in town."

"I have no desire to catch him, or anybody else."

"Well, I declare if you ain't the strangest girl that I ever saw! I don't know of another girl that wouldn't jump at such a chance. He's only thirty, good-looking, rich, and they say there never was a kinder husband."

"That all may be. I am perfectly willing that any

one else should jump at the chance. I don't wish to."

"Don't wish to! Why not, may I ask?"

"That is my own affair, and I am not aware that it concerns anybody else in the world," said Linda with a decision that brought a flush into Mrs. Gabberly's cheek.

"Of course not, if you don't want anybody else to know; but I thought, seeing that I was an old friend and you had no one to advise with, I might be of some help: but if you don't want my advice, of course I couldn't urge it upon you. Only this I will say, that you'd better think twice about it. You may go through the swamp and take up with a crooked stick at last, but if you do, don't say that I'm to blame."

"You may be sure I shall not," said Linda with a smile, as her visitor took her departure. Mrs. Gabberly being somewhat piqued at her discomfiture, lost no time in making it known from house to house, much to the disgust of Mr. Felloe, that Linda had given him the mitten, but why she had done it no mortal on earth could tell.

There was one other matter that caused Linda trouble. Letters came, — always post-marked "Boston," always without a signature, — enclosing money for Winifred; but the money had been put into the savings bank in trust for Winifred. Who was the sender? Why did he, she, or they, send? No reason was ever given in the brief letter containing the money, other than that the sender felt a warm personal interest in Winifred. But would not the "somebody" put in an appearance by and by, and assert a prior claim to her? Linda resolved that come what might she never would give her up, — unless compelled by the law. She did not wonder that everybody caressed the child, nor that they called her pet names, nor that strangers, when they passed her on the street, turned to look at her sunny

face and golden hair. She did not wonder that Winifred had found a tender place in the heart of Mr. Meek, for who could resist her winning ways? So captivating was she that Mr. Meek frequently came to the cottage to see her.

"Winifred is such a little witch that I can't stay away," he said to Linda one day, bowing and smiling, and taking a seat on the bench beneath the porch.

"I am glad she is a good girl," was the reply.

"She could not be any thing else under your care, Miss Fair."

"I want to bring her up right. She may be very easily turned to the right or to the wrong."

"If you should miss her some day, you may know where to look for her." Though he said it in jest, there was something in the words, or in the tone, or in the smile lurking in his face, that made it seem as if he was in earnest.

"I do not intend to let anybody ever steal her away," said Linda.

"I dare say that if anybody steals her they will have to steal you at the same time," said Mr. Meek, the sinister smile still lurking in his face.

"Oh, I am not afraid of that: no one would take the trouble of carrying me away."

"It must be quite a tax for you to care for her."

"Oh, no, not in the least. That is no hardship which yields us the highest pleasure. I am very happy when I am working for her."

"Still, it costs you something. I have all along admired your devotion and sacrifice, and have often reproached myself for not doing something for her, instead of letting you bear all the burden. I have seen her so often on her way to school, and she has so much sunshine about her, that I feel as if I almost had a personal interest in her."

What was it that set Linda's brain in a whirl? Was it because Mr. Meek had used the very words she had read in the letters that had come to her? or was it something in his manner toward her, — a manner not altogether agreeable?

Linda never, even in childhood, had quite liked Mr. Meek, and the repugnance had become downright aversion. He was courteous and kind, but his politeness was distasteful, his presence repulsive. Why it was so, she could not have told, with all the help of Locke, Whately, Hamilton, or any other writer on mental or moral philosophy.

"I cannot bear him, and that is all there is to it," was the only answer she could give to herself, when trving to make out why it was she did not like Mr. Meek.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Thus it comes about that some such favored souls can discover by an insight wholly unknown to reason when there is evil in the air. As the horses of Bengal, when a tiger comes out from the jungle in search of prey, sniff him from afar, so they, by an instinct almost divine, know when they are in the presence of one who would devour them. Reason cannot comprehend a sense so closely allied to the spirit realm. As the fawn is startled by any sound that falls upon its ears, be it never so light, so was Linda by the growing familiarity of Mr. Meek, and his increasing interest in Winifred.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BRIGHT STAR OF SOCIETY.

NONE of the guests of Congress Hall, Saratoga, attracted more attention than Miss Bertha Wayland of Boston, and Aunt Janet Porgie. There were mothers accompanied by their daughters, but men who passed them without recognition on the grand piazza lifted their hats to Aunt Janet and Miss Wayland. If Bertha visited the spring in the morning, there were several young men, and men also in the prime of life, who found it convenient to be walking in that direction at the same time, that they might aid her in obtaining a glass of water. If Aunt Janet ordered her coachman to drive out to the lake, the gentlemen directed their coachmen to drive in the same direction. If Miss Wayland wished to take a sail on the lake, there were many gentlemen ready to render her every possible attention.

Among the visitors at Saratoga was Moses Meek, jr., who had finished his studies and graduated at Harvard, attended the Law School, and was in business for himself; but having burned a great deal of midnight gas in Boston, had gone to Saratoga to recruit his wasted energies, and to learn a little more in an honorable ex-member of Congress' clubhouse. It gave him pleasure to be Miss Wayland's escort in the promenade, to dance with her, to render her and Aunt Janet all possible attention.

Sipping Congress water in the morning; riding somewhere for their health in the forenoon; dressing for dinner; taking a seat in the great dining-hall, listening to the rattling of crockery, waiting for something to eat, and getting very little; sitting on the piazza and listening to the band; taking another ride before tea; promenading in the evening; dancing till midnight, made up the daily round at Saratoga. Miss Wayland went through it all, day after day, night after night, week after week, during the season, — dancing at the Union when she was not dancing at the Congress.

Aunt Janet was holding her court in the parlor and upon the grand piazza, keeping a sharp eye upon every thing going on around her, — upon all who craved the honor of an introduction to Bertha, finding out who they were, and what were their expectations.

When the season waned at Saratoga, Aunt Janet and Bertha proceeded to Newport, and as business was dull in Boston, everybody being away at the seashore or the mountains, Mr. Meek likewise resolved to visit Newport. Day after day, at the fashionable hour, they bathed in the surf. On "fort" days they rode to the fort. Night after night they danced cotillons and quadrilles and whirled in the waltz. They strolled along the beach when the moon was rising, and saw its silver light upon the waves, and Mr. Meek recited poetry about the sea Daily and nightly, as at Saratoga, Bertha went through the process of dressing for dinner, and dressing again for the dance. Daily and nightly she listened to the sentimental soft talk in the promenade, in the rests between the dances, and while eating scalloped oysters, cake and ice cream, at midnight, till pleasure palled and sentiment become insipid. She went to bed in the early hours of the morning, to dream of strolling by the sea, of bathing in the surf, of being taken out by the undertow, — out — out into the great ocean, and there was no one to rescue her.

When the season was over at Newport, Bertha and Aunt Janet returned to the quiet mansion on Beacon street, for a few weeks of rest before going to Washington, where Aunt Janet had decided to spend the winter.

Who could tell what might come from their spending the winter in Washington? Aunt Janet was planning for the future. She had not given up the hope of seeing an alliance, through Bertha, between the Porgie family and the nobility of the old world, or if not that, with some distinguished family in America. She determined that Bertha should be the belle of Washington. She was sure that her beauty, her brilliant qualities, and the sweetness of her disposition, together with her wealth, would attract a crowd of admirers. She was well enough acquainted with the world to know that Bertha's wealth alone would bring suitors for her hand, and that wealth and beauty together would make her a bright star in society. If Bertha were queen of society, she herself would be queen dowager.

Aunt Janet prepared for the campaign by taking her own dressmaker with her to Washington. There were so many trunks that the baggage man at the depot asked what opera company was on its travels. She set up her own establishment, with her own hired mansion, so that ambassadors and ministers plenipotentiary might come to her court. If any should come whom she did not care to favor, they might wait as Doctor Johnson waited in the ante-room of the king's palace, for an audience with majesty. She could receive as well as Mrs. Secretary of State, or my lady of the British embassy. She could have a little world exclusively her own. Bertha would be its sun, and lesser luminaries would revolve around her, and be dazzled by her beauty and warmed by her brightness. Whenever she appeared, men would bow down in ado-

ration, like the sun worshippers of the Orient. And behind the radiant orb she herself would sit prime mover of all the forces of her little universe.

There was no more stylish turn-out on the avenue than that in which Aunt Janet and Miss Wayland rode to the Capitol, to hear the speeches in the Senate; or in calling to leave their cards at the mansion of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Interior, and at the houses of the regents of the Smithsonian Institute: for Aunt Janet delighted in the society of scientific and literary men. They gave to select society such a tone as no other class of men could give. She would be the Madam Recamier of the American Capital, and her *salon* the resort of Culture, Nobility and Greatness. So would she shine in the firmament.

The reflection that she was shining with a borrowed light did not detract from her pleasure. She knew that it was Bertha's radiance, her wealth, wit, worth, beauty and brilliancy that filled her parlors on her reception night; but that did not diminish her complacency, especially when she read the glowing descriptions of her entertainments written by the special correspondents of the newspaper press.

"It is acknowledged by all hands," wrote one correspondent, "that there are no receptions so *recherche* as those of Madam Porgie of Boston, who is spending the winter in Washington. She receives on Wednesday. The street is usually blocked with carriages, — not only of senators and representatives and the heads of departments, but of the Diplomatic Corps as well. In Madam Porgie's *salon* you hear the chattering of French as constantly as if in Paris, and of German as if you were at Berlin."

"At these receptions of Madam Porgie, you are sure to meet some one who has distinguished himself in literature,

science or art. Madam Porgie receives superbly; but not the least attraction of these receptions is her ward, Miss Wayland, whose incomparable beauty, ease, grace and dignity have made her the sensation of the season. She is not merely the belle of Washington,—she is its attraction and glory! Everybody adores her. No party is complete without her."

"The belle of the season" was invited to dinner, not only by the senators and the secretaries, but by the minister of all the Russias, by my lord, the minister of H. B. M. the Queen of England, and to a state dinner given by the President.

At a party given by the Secretary of War, she danced with Lieut. Spoony, just out of West Point, who bowed to her with West Point politeness, whose steps were of the West Point regulation precision, who walked with West Point dignity, unlike any other dignity in heaven or on earth! She danced with officers of the navy, with members of Congress, and with attaché of the legations. Senators asked for the honor of promenading with Miss Wayland, in all their senatorial dignity,—vastly superior to that worn by a member of the House of Representatives. His honor, of the Supreme Court, esteemed it a new honor to take her down to lunch, and wore upon the occasion a dignity superior to that put on by the honorable senators, for he had but just laid aside his black gown with immaculate judicial dignity in all its folds,—a dignity dry as dust, but incorruptible, unapproachable, unutterable. The Senate, the House, the Bar, the Bench, the Diplomatic Corps, the Departments, all revolved around the bright sun of the Porgie system. If the House and Senate were to be likened to Mercury and Venus, and the Departments and the Bar to those outlying worlds that move in solemn majesty in their orbits, between them were the asteroids,—the little pinches of matter,—the subordi-

nates of the Treasury, Interior, War and Navy, the clerks, lieutenants, captains, controllers, first assistants and second assistants.

What a dreary round it was! Receptions at home; receptions at the White House; receptions given by the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of the Interior, by the Post-master General, by the Speaker of the House, by the senator from Michigan, by the senator from New York, the senator from Down East, from Out West; — dinners, parties, hops, balls; dancing the German from midnight till morning; dressing for the morning, for the afternoon, for the evening. It was a round that brought paleness to the cheeks, weakness to the body, emptiness to the mind, hunger to the soul. Lent came, and society, which had been whirling like the dervises of the East, stopped its dancing, took a pious breath, ate boiled eggs instead of beefsteak at breakfast, had very little for dinner and next to nothing for supper, hung up its tulle and lace and low-necked dresses, put on sober alpaca, took the scarlet blankets off from its poodles and replaced them with those of ashen hue, hunted the house over to find its prayer-book, wiped the dust from the covers, went to church with the corners of the mouth drawn down in a pietistical manner, kneeled on a consecrated hassock, read its forgotten prayers, — resolutely determined to read enough in the forty days between Ash Wednesday and Easter to last through the year!

CHAPTER XXVI.

DOCTORS IN COUNCIL.

FAIR to the eye and sweet to the taste are the apples of Sodom. We pluck, eat to surfeiting, and turn away in disgust, and still the hunger grows. Though we eat forever we are never satisfied. Surfeited with pleasure, rejoicing that she was once more in her own home, Bertha Wayland sat by the cheerful fire in the parlor, thinking of the past.

"I am glad that I am at home once more," she said to Aunt Janet.

"You speak as if you hadn't enjoyed yourself."

"I am heartily sick and tired of it all," Bertha replied.

"Well, you are a strange girl, I must say. You are a Wayland out and out, and not a Porgie at all. We had every thing our own way at Saratoga, at Newport, and especially at Washington, and yet you are not satisfied."

"I am more than satisfied, aunt, I am satiated. I am tired of dancing with brainless young men, and weary of compliments from men who ought to have sense enough not to utter them. I am nauseated with what has been said to me by men old enough to be my grandfather."

The words were spoken with an energy that surprised Aunt Janet.

"Why, my dear, what is the matter? You seem to be dreadfully out of sorts, and now that you have broached the

subject, I want to say that I was not at all satisfied with the way you treated some of the gentlemen who showed you particular attentions."

"I didn't want any particular attentions shown me."

"Well, perhaps not; but there are not many girls that have had such a chance as you have had for making a noble alliance who would have thrown it away so recklessly."

Aunt Janet spoke reproachfully. She was greatly displeased with Bertha for rejecting the attentions of Sir George Crumpet, attached to the British embassy, who had taken her down to dinner at the English ambassador's grand banquet, and who danced with her afterwards; who came to Aunt Janet's receptions; who called and left his card and desired a private interview, asking permission to declare his honorable intentions to Miss Wayland.

"I must say, Bertha, that I am greatly displeased with you. You know that I have had my heart set upon uniting our family with some of the noble families of the old world, and when I had every thing so nicely brought about, you upset it all. It was the greatest disappointment of my life." Aunt Janet applied her handkerchief to her eyes.

"I am very sorry, aunty, that I could not please you in the matter, but I did not like him."

"Why didn't you like him?"

"Because I didn't."

"That is only a woman's reason."

"You speak as if a woman's reason was of no account."

"But you might have liked him. I don't believe there is another girl in all Boston who would have thrown away such a chance."

"I dare say there are a great many girls who would have done just as I did; at least, I hope there are."

"But he belongs to the nobility, my dear."

"I am very glad he does, but I didn't want to marry him just on that account."

"But I did so want to see an alliance between our family and the English nobility, that I can't help expressing my disappointment."

"I am very sorry to disappoint you, aunty, but I have no objection whatever to *your* making an alliance with Sir George Crumpet. I think that there cannot be much difference between your ages; but you must really excuse me from doing it."

It was a sharp thrust at Aunt Janet, who wisely concluded to drop the subject; for she had discovered that contact with the world, with men who were continually saying pretty things to Bertha, had roused a spirit of hostility in her. She was taking up arms against society. Many a flatterer had retired from her presence feeling that he had made a fool of himself.

"I am sorry that I could not please you, aunt, but I could not; nor have I been able to please myself. I doubt if I have pleased anybody, nor has anybody pleased me. I am disappointed with what I have seen of society during the last year."

"Why, my dear, what is the matter with you? You seem to be terribly stirred up."

"Well, I am. I don't deny it. We went to Saratoga last summer to enjoy ourselves. What was the enjoyment? Driving, dining, dancing, — the same thing over and over, varied only by the exchange of one man who could only say senseless things for another man who was equally senseless. We girls glowered at one another; snubbed one another, and did every thing we could to make somebody else feel miserable by word, look or action. It was the same thing over again at Newport. Among all the gentlemen who

walked out with me upon the rocks, not one of them ever talked sense, but always nonsense, — about Cupid and his darts, and love and his victims. They said I was beautiful, that I slew them with my eyes, captivated them with my voice, and was cruel-hearted. If we went out for a picnic, none of them ever could interpret to me the voices in the air, but must all sit at my feet, and say that my eyes were like the daisies, my lips like cherries, my cheeks like the bloom of a peach, my voice like that of the nightingale! I thought that I should find wisdom in Washington, but there it was the same thing. At receptions we smiled and simpered, looked at each other's dresses, talked of the weather, asked if we had heard the great senator's speech, the other great senator's reply; it was the same at dinner; the same everywhere and always. I have seen and heard a great deal, but I have learned nothing, except that what we call society is a sham."

Aunt Janet had always looked upon Bertha as a very peculiar girl, unlike anybody else. She knew that beneath those far-seeing eyes there was a soul with an earnest purpose; but she had not expected to hear her utter such sentiments.

"I am sorry, my dear, that you are so disappointed and so put out about every thing. I am sure I have tried to do what I could for your happiness and welfare," Aunt Janet replied sorrowfully.

"I know you have, aunt, but the happiness hasn't come. I dare say it is my fault, or because I am made as I am. I am disgusted with myself as well as with everybody else. It is a relief to be at home in the old house once more. I want to rest and think. I wish that I had somebody to help me, but I've been in such a whirl that I cannot put two things together. I am sorry that I ever went to Mad-

am Posey's school, for there we were not taught to put any thing together, — to think two consecutive thoughts. My mind is as hollow as an empty shell. We had only varnish put on. I don't know any thing. I can't do any thing; there is not any thing for me to do. I aim at nothing. I am as useless as one of the dead Pharaohs in their tombs. I expected gold in society, and found brass. I hoped for richness, and found poverty; I went to obtain fulness, and came back empty."

"I am sorry, Bertha, that you are so much disturbed. It is only because you are a little tired. I think that you had better go out and take a breath of fresh air. It will revive you."

"Thank you, aunt. I think I will."

A few minutes later Bertha was strolling along the Beacon street mall.

It was a spring morning. The sun was shining brightly, and the trees upon the Common were beginning to put forth their leaves. The bluebirds and robins, which had been south during the winter, imitating the example of Aunt Janet and Bertha, had returned to their old haunts. The birds were acquainted with Bertha, for they had carolled to her through the by-gone summers from the elms in front of her house. They had seen her tripping down the mall on the bright mornings, and, like the Troubadours of old, had improvised a song in praise of her beauty, and now were back again to sing to her as in other days.

"I wish that I were a bird; then would I fly away and be at rest," said Bertha, recalling the words of a song. The *ennui* was upon her and she could not shake it off. She was weary of life.

"The birds are happy and I wish I could be," she said to herself. "They are happy because they have some-

thing to do, — to get their daily bread, to build their nests. I wonder if it would not be better for me if I had to earn my living."

Without knowing it she had hit a very important nail on the head.

"If I only had something to do, some worthy end to live for, I should be happier. I wonder if I ever shall shake off this horror."

She strolled along the paths, listening to the birds, but her mind was wandering in dreamland, — asking questions and getting no answer. Then she went into the art stores on Tremont street and looked at the pictures, but having seen them many times, they had lost their power to charm her. She made her way through the jostling crowd of women, with packages of dry goods in their hands which they had purchased on Winter street. Then she turned into Washington street, from thence into a side street, wandering without purpose, and for the moment was but a straw or bubble in the great stream of human life eddying and surging round her.

She came to an unfinished building. The walls were up to the fourth story. There were piles of brick, stone and lumber in the street. There was a staging over the sidewalk. Men were tugging at the windlass of a derrick. A great timber was going up. The ropes were tightening, the pulleys creaking. The workmen above were shouting to those below. Suddenly something gave way. She heard a crash and then a confused noise, — a rumbling, a sound of falling timber; another crash; a third, coming nearer and nearer. Not only the staging and the timbers, but the whole wall was falling.

"Run! run! run!" She heard the shout; saw people on the opposite sidewalk gesticulating to her. The bricks

were falling around her. All strength left her. She covered her face with her hands to shut out she knew not what. Then she felt that there were strong arms around her; that somebody was lifting her with the strength of a giant, bearing her over the bricks, stones and timber into the street. Suddenly the giant dropped her. His arms unclasped as if all his strength had gone out in an instant. She staggered, but did not fall. There was a great crash behind her. Bricks rolled past her. Timbers swept down with a whirr through the air.

She was upon the other side of the street safe, but behind her, half buried beneath the fallen wreck, was a man lying with his face downward and his hands reaching out motionless toward her. His hat was jammed down upon his head, and the pavement was spattered with his blood. Men were running to rescue him; picking away the bricks, lifting the boards and timbers.

"He is breathing," some one said. They took him up and carried him to the sidewalk where Bertha was standing. She looked down into the blood-stained face. She had seen it before somewhere; it was a face that had haunted her. They were not quite the features that she had seen in her dreams. The features that haunted her were those of a boy, but this was a man's face. Whose? Her heart had been standing still, but it leaped into her throat when after gazing a moment she recognized Caleb Krinkle.

A policeman had already called a carriage, and was driving away the crowd that had gathered.

"Take him to the hospital," said the policeman.

"Take him to my house," said Bertha with decision.

"I have no authority to take him there," said the policeman.

"But I have. He has saved my life. I shall not let him go to the hospital," Bertha replied.

"Do you know him, or have you any authority in the case?"

"Yes; he is an old acquaintance. Go there," she said, handing the officer a card and speaking authoritatively.

The policeman read it and touched his hat to her. He recognized her authority without further question. With the help of bystanders Caleb was lifted into the carriage, and was driven away. Bertha stepped into another carriage and reached her home in advance of the first.

"Get a doctor quick," said Bertha to the coachman; and the coachman, seeing that he was obeying the order of a Beacon street lady who had plenty of money, lashed his horses to a run, — a very unusual thing for a coachman to do, — and after a while, returned with Doctor Tragacanth. Bertha's own coachman, who was sunning himself in the yard when the carriage containing Caleb drove up, followed by a crowd of boys, and who ran out to see what the commotion was about, having heard Miss Wayland's command, had run as fast as he could in search of Doctor Squills, and was fortunate enough to find him in his office, but just going out to make his usual calls. Aunt Janet's house boy, James, or Jim, as the cook usually called him, — eager to win the good will of his mistress and an extra half dollar, — made his legs fly like drumsticks, while running to the office of Doctor Biceps. Thus it came about that Doctors Tragacanth, Squills and Biceps were each called to take charge of the case, and it so happened that they arrived at the mansion simultaneously.

The surgical gentlemen bowed stiffly to each other as they entered the chamber into which Caleb had been carried.

"This is my case, I think," said Doctor Tragacanth.

"Mine, if you please," Doctor Squills replied.

"I intend to claim my rights, gentlemen," remarked Doctor Biceps.

"I shall not relinquish it."

"Neither shall I."

"Nor I."

So they severally said.

Doctor Tragacanth began to examine the wound on the head, Doctor Squills proceeded to look at the bruises upon the chest, while Doctor Biceps gave his attention to the contusions on the limbs.

"Please leave nothing undone, gentlemen, that can be done for him."

It was a message from Miss Wayland, delivered by Peter, and as it was addressed to them collectively, the surgical gentlemen did their best, in perfect accord, to patch up the mangled form.

"There is a very bad contusion in the *occipital region*," said Doctor Tragacanth. "It is very bad. The cuticle is cut, not only through the papillary layer, but through the *cronium*. The *posterior condyloid fossa* is laid bare from the superior curved line across the *foramen magnum*. The *cerebellum*, the *cerebro spinal axis*, the *encephalon*, and the *medulla oblongato*, all must be more or less affected by the blow."

"I discover," said Doctor Squills, "that two of the *costal cartilages* are broken, and the lumbar regions appear to be seriously injured. There is a discoloration in the vicinity of the *sacro lumbalis*."

"The injuries to the limbs," said Doctor Biceps, "if not so dangerous as those about the head and chest, are still quite serious. The right *fibula* is splintered; there is an abrasion covering the entire surface of the right *patella*, ex

tending from the point where the *quadriceps extensor crucis* is attached, to the *ligamentum patella.*"

"There is a deep incision," Doctor Tragacanth said, "on the *os frontalis*, which may have injured the left *orbicularis palpebrarum*, and perhaps the *corrugator supercilli* and *tensor tarsi.* The *retrahens aurem* is bruised. There are contusions of the right *zigomaticus major*, the *compressor naris*, and the *levator labii superioris proprius.*"

"Of course we cannot know," said Doctor Squills, "whether or not the abdominal region is injured internally, but the external discolorations are quite numerous on the *thorax* and along the *dorsal pedicles* to the *sacrum* and the *coccyx.*"

"There is a displacement," said Doctor Biceps, "of the *right ungual phalanges* and the *metatarsals;* possibly the tendon, of the *extensor brevis digatorium* and the *abductor polices* may be detached, but unless mortification should set in, I do not think it will be necessary to amputate."

All this, rendered into every-day language, would have meant that there were very serious wounds on the back of the head, at the base of the brain. So severe were they that Caleb Krinkle was lying senseless before the doctors, and quite likely might continue so for several days. The blows had seriously affected the brain and the nerves connected with the spinal column. There were cuts here and there upon his head, in the left eyebrow, on the bridge of the nose, on the left cheek, and behind the left ear. There was a bad bruise on the right knee, one of the bones of his right leg was cracked, two of the lower ribs were broken, and there were bruises upon his body. In addition, the great toe of the right foot was badly jammed, but Doctor Biceps was not in favor of cutting it off just then.

Having thus gone over the case, the blood was washed

from the matted hair, the scalp laid back in place, sticking plaster applied to the wounds, and the great toe done up in a rag. Science could do no more. The three wise men had done their best and the rest must be left to nature.

The three doctors went home quite well satisfied with their morning's work, — happy to know that when quarter-day came round their bills would not be sent to the penniless young man, but to the heiress of Beacon street.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PETER AND HIS PATIENT.

WHERE was he? It was a question that Caleb Krinkle was turning over in his mind. That he was in a strange place, a very nice place, that he was in bed, that something was the matter with him, was evident. The chamber was large. There were beautiful paintings on the walls; there was a marble mantle, with a fire beneath it in the grate. The curtains around the windows were of crimson and gold. A mirror reflected all the scene. The bedstead was of black walnut, richly carved. There was a stand with vials and goblets upon it, and a beautiful bouquet of fresh flowers in a vase. Where was he? He had not the remotest idea. Where had he been last? His mind was rather foggy, and he could not make out much. What was he doing? He remembered that he took a stroll on the common; that the robins were singing; that he listened to them awhile, and thought that they were wishing him good-morning. He remembered that he walked down a street. He had an indistinct recollection of the tumbling down of a staging, of seeing a lady in danger, and of wishing he could help her. But all else was fog, with not a shadow of recollection flitting about in it. He went over the events a second time, but with no better success. While thus thinking,

the door opened and a black face appeared with thick lips, a broad nose, a mass of white hair above the features, and a short, stumpy body below them. The negro closed the door softly and came on tiptoe toward him, — so softly that Caleb could not hear his steps.

"Good-morning," said Caleb.

"Bress de Lord! Good-morning, sah," said the negro, rolling the whites of his eyes. Caleb concluded that he must be a devout fellow.

"How do you do, sah? Hope you are pretty well, sah."

"First rate. But will you please tell me where I am?"

"Why, you are right here, sah. That's where you are, sah."

"Oh, yes, I know that; but I don't quite understand where here is."

"Wall, sah, it is in dis yere chamber, sah; with me, sah."

"Will you please tell me who you are?"

"I am old Peter, sah."

"Haven't I seen you somewhere?"

"I think it quite likely, sah; I've been dere, sah." Old Peter smiled, displaying a set of very white teeth. Caleb laughed at the reply.

"How long have I been here?"

"Oh, just long enough to take a little nap, sah; you've been asleep, sah."

"I know that; but how comes it that I am asleep here? This isn't my room."

"Oh, yes, sah, dis is your room; set apart 'spressly for you, sah; just like one of de rooms in de mansion prepared for us by de good Lord, and I have de care of ye, sah, tank de Lord."

Caleb could not quite understand it. There must be a screw loose about him somewhere, for his brain was tired

and he could not put things together. He never had been in such a luxurious apartment before. The stories of the "Arabian Nights" floated through his brain, and the negro's allusion to the mansions prepared for the redeemed, instead of enlightening, confused him. That he was in a blessed place was evident from what he could see around him: but was it not all a dream?

The negro pulled a great silver watch from his pocket, looked at it, and then placed his fingers on Caleb's wrist, and counted in a whisper, "One — two — three," on up to seventy. Caleb wondered if he was a doctor.

"De internal machinery is going with de perfoundest regularity dis morning, sah. I tink, sah, we shall pull you through all right, sah," — which was Greek to Caleb.

"It was a very narrer chance, sah; we shall bring you through by de skin of our teeth, sah. But de rhububs and sillabubs and de nitro glycerim and de what-ye-may-call-'em have been blessed by de good Lord for to raise you up again, sah."

"Who is pulling me through?"

"Me and de doctor, sah; Doctor Tragacanth, sah, de bery best doctor dere is in de city, sah. We are pulling you from de bery jaws of def, sah. We was 'fraid dat you would go to de kingdom-come in spite of us, sah, but we put de nitro glycerim upon you, and we gave you de sillabubs, and dey wound de fixin's 'round you, and so kept de wheels of de mortal machine agwine, sah. Old Peter has watched by your bedside, sah, widout any intercession."

"I am very much obliged to you, Peter."

"Tank you, sah. I was determined to do what I could to keep de mysterious pulses of life a ticking, sah, and de Lord has been pleased to smile upon our labors, sah."

"But you haven't told me how I came here."

"Dey brought you in de kerrige, sah."

"Whose carriage?"

"I can't zactly say whose kerrige it was. I 'spect it's one dey picked up, sah."

"Who brought me?"

"De perlice, sah. Dey were bery kind, sah."

"Certainly they were; but what did they bring me here for?"

"Because missus told 'em dey must, sah. One of 'em asked if she took de 'sponsibility, and she said dat she took it, and dey give in, and didn't make no further dejection, sah."

Caleb could not make it out,—picking up a carriage—the policemen giving in to a lady—the "'sponsibility" and "dejection;" there was such a tangle that his tired brain could not find any beginning or end to the thread.

"Where had I been?"

"De Lord knows, but I don't, sah."

"Had I been doing any thing?"

"Dere you have me agin, sah. I haven't de gift of seeing wid dese mortal eyes de wayward footsteps of all de people on de great roun' globe, sah. I don't know as you had been doing noffin, sah."

"I must have been somewhere."

"I tink bery likely, sah."

"You spoke of your mistress: who is she?"

"Why, she is missus, sah; dat's who she is."

"Where does she live?"

"Why, bress your soul, she lives in dis bery house, sah."

There was a portrait of a middle-aged lady hanging above the mantle. The countenance was a little prim, but upon the whole a pleasing one. Caleb concluded that it was the portrait of the lady whom Peter called missus.

"May I ask, Peter, whose portrait that is?"

"Dat is de portrait of Miss Porgie, who lives here. She has done ebery ting she could for you, sah. She told me to get de bery best nusses for you, sah, and to leave noffin undone to get you out of de jaws of def, sah."

"She is very kind; I never can repay her."

"And missus says she never can repay you for what you hab done in saving her life, sah."

"Saved her life!"

"Yes, sah, you saved missus' life. Didn't you catch right hold of her and carry her out into de street when de bricks and de stone and de boards and de timber was a raining and tumbling and falling and coming down just like de last great day of judgment all around her? Yes, you did, sah."

"Oh, I remember. And wasn't she hurt?"

"No, sah, not de leastest bit. But de timbers and de bricks, dey smashed you to de ground, and you was took up all pounded to a jelly, wid a great gash on your head, and de blood a stainin' de ground, and you was all as limsey as a rag, sah, and didn't know nuffin; and de perlice were gwine to take you to de hospital, but missus said no. You had saved her life, and she wouldn't tink of it, sah, but had 'em bring you right here, sah, and de Lord be praised for it! If dey had tuk ye to de hospital, where dere would have been no old Peter to pull ye through, I spect, sah, dat Def would have come along wid his big black kerrige, all hung roun' wid black velvet, and de plumes waving above ye, and would have carried you down to de dark and silent grave, sah."

Caleb listened to Peter's narration with grateful emotions. The fog was clearing away. He remembered the workmen on the building, the heavy timber swaying in the air, the

fall of the derrick, the crash, the giving way of the staging; remembered seeing a lady covering her face with her hands; remembered that a great wave of thought came over him. How to save her was the question. Crash! Crash! Crash! It was above him. A bound, and he was behind her. He had the strength of a giant. Who she was he did not know. To rescue her, to snatch her from death, was the uncontrollable impulse of the moment. All the rest was dark.

But he had saved her! Thank God! He had done his duty.

"Was I injured?"

"Wall, sah, I reckon you was. De doctors said so, sah. Doctor Squills said dat your costly cartridges were broken by de lumber dat fell upon you, sah, and dat de lignum vite someting, dat was fastened to de extensive quadruped, or someting or oder, was upbraided, sah."

"That was very bad indeed, Peter," said Caleb, smiling.

"And, sah, Doctor Tragacanth said dat dere was something de matter with de corrugated spermaciti, sah. And jes dere he said something about Major Zygomati. Who de gemmen is I dunno, sah; but de doctor called him a cuss, sah. Doctor Squills said dat he couldn't zactly say whether you was abominably injured or not, but he said dat de borax was all black and blue, sah."

"I had no idea that I was so badly hurt as that," said Caleb, laughing.

"Dey said a great deal more, sah; so much dat I reckoned you was about done for, sah. Dere was some talk about cutting of de unequal flanges, and de oder tings connected wid dem, sah, but Doctor Biceps said he should have de mortification to do it, and dey didn't, sah. Dey is all dere, I reckon, sah."

Caleb could not think of lying there, a pensioner, as it were; he must be up and away to his own room.

"Well, Peter, I am very grateful for what you and your mistress have done for me. I must see her some day and thank her for her kindness, but if you will bring me my clothes I will get up now."

"I should ascertain, sah, dat it would be entirely more conclusive to your health to remain quiet a little while longer, sah."

"How long have I been here?"

"Quite a considerable length of time, sah. De sun has been making his daily circus through de heavens for two whole weeks, sah, since you were brought here, sah."

"Two weeks!"

"Yes, sah, fourteen days, — a whole fortnight, sah."

"If I have been a burden upon your mistress that length of time, I cannot think of staying longer; so if you will get my clothes I will relieve you and your mistress of all further care."

"Wall, sah, I can get your clothes, but please 'scuse me, sah; I should ascertain dat dey isn't in jes de condition dat a gemmen would like to make his 'pearance in public; dey is altogether tattered and tored, sah."

"But I can't lie here. If my clothes are not fit to be seen, I shall have to ask you to send some one to my room to bring up my other suit."

"Oh, yes, sah; dat we will do wid pleasure, sah; but if I were you, I wouldn't try to get up jes yet, sah."

"I am tired of lying here."

"I dare say, sah. Two weeks is a very long time to lie in a declining position, and mebbe you feel somewhat stiff in de jints."

"Yes, I do, and I guess I will sit up awhile." Caleb

made an effort to raise himself, but found it impossible to lift his head or use his arms. He was as weak as a child.

Then, as his eye fell upon the mirror, he saw that there was very little color in his cheeks. He was surprised to see how thin in flesh he was. The thought that he was helpless, that he was a burden upon others, disquieted him. He could not lie there. With one heroic effort he would throw off the clothes and assert his independence. He made the attempt, but fell back powerless, with pains darting through him like needles.

"I don't tink, sah, dat I would try to do it if I were you. I should ascertain, sah, dat you had better 'bide by old Peter's judgment. Old Peter and Doctor Tragacanth together will pull you through, sah. I have promised missus dat you shall have de very best of nussing, and she's very particular, sah, and inquires after you morning, noon and night, and several times in de forenoon and de afternoon, sah. She says to me, 'Don't let him want for noffin.' Such being de case, sah, you will not tink it strange dat I have de utmost solitude for your recovery, sah. Old Peter, wid de help of de doctor and de good Lord, hab brought ye up so far from def's door, and dey will make ye as good as new, sah."

"Thank you, Peter, and please give my thanks to your mistress, and tell her that when I am a little stronger I will thank her in person."

"Yes, sah, wid de greatest pleasure," said Peter, looking at his watch, "but now, sah, if you please, de hour hab arrived for you to take one of de seductive powders dat de doctor left; it is for de qualming of de nerves and for de general restoration of de equal abraham of de system."

Caleb was greatly amused at the explanation of Peter, but as he felt weary, closed his eyes and was very soon asleep.

The crisis was passed. The injury had been very serious, but, thanks to a vigorous constitution, his strength, quickly returned. He thanked God that he had been able to do his duty when duty called, and that he had been so kindly cared for. Peter was not only an attentive nurse, but a very amusing and agreeable companion. His words were not always the best that could have been chosen, but they expressed his ideas, and that was sufficient. The only drawback to Caleb's happiness was the thought that he was indebted to the bounty of the good lady whose portrait was before him. He was able to sit in a rocking-chair, robed in a rich dressing-gown, which Peter brought to him with the compliments of his mistress, and he wished to thank her in person.

"Please give my compliments to your mistress," he said, "and say to Miss Porgie that I am sitting in state this morning and shall be very happy to receive callers."

Peter retired with the message, and after a little time returned, throwing the door wide open and standing by it. A large and stately lady with gray hairs and a pleasant countenance entered the room, advanced and shook hands with him.

"Good-morning, Mr. Krinkle. I am very happy to see you getting on so well. We never can repay you for what you have done, never, never. It was a heroic action."

"I only did my duty, but I never can thank you for your kindness to me," he replied.

Was this the lady he had rescued? She would weigh two hundred pounds at least. She did not seem to be so large when he clasped his arms around her. But there was some one behind her.

"I need not introduce Miss Bertha, — you know her," said Miss Porgie, stepping one side, and Bertha stood be-

fore him with a bright flush on her cheeks, and with some thing of heaven in her eyes.

"Miss Wayland!"

It was all he could say. She grasped his hand, touched her lips to his forehead, and gazed into his eyes.

Ah, that moment of bliss! of gratitude and thankfulness!

Silence is more eloquent than speech at times. With clasped hands they thanked God in their hearts that so their pathways had crossed.

She seated herself upon an ottoman at his feet, holding him by the hand, and looking up into his face, to let him know that in her whole being she thanked him. It was a gratitude that words could not express.

"How strange, how wonderful that I should be at hand when you most needed me! I did not know it was *you* whom I saw standing irresolute and powerless to move amid the falling bricks," said Caleb.

"Nor did I know who had saved me, till you were picked up and brought to the sidewalk and laid at my feet. O Mr. Krinkle, I never can thank you enough."

"Nor can I ever express my thanks to you for taking such care of me through all these weeks.

"But how happens it that you have not known till this moment that I was the one whom you had rescued? Who did you think it was?"

"I supposed that it was Miss Porgie."

"O Mr. Krinkle! you surely could not have carried *me*, I am such a monster: we should have both perished together," said Aunt Janet.

"I supposed that Peter had told you all about it," said Bertha.

"Mr. Krinkle nebber asked me if it was you, missus; he asked whose dat picter was, and I said, Miss Porgie's."

"You are right, Peter. I came to the conclusion that it was the portrait of the lady whose life I had attempted to save, and I think, Miss Porgie, even if it had been yourself instead of Miss Wayland, I should have done the same. I did not stop to think how much I could lift, but at that moment I could have taken up almost any thing."

They went over the scene, — Bertha telling of her loitering upon the Common, her wandering for no purpose through the streets, her coming to the building, of the sudden loss of strength, how she expected instant death, how she found herself borne over the timbers and bricks to the middle of the street, and all the rest of the story. And Caleb went over his wanderings, his purposeless walk, going for nothing, hearing the crash, seeing some one standing there covering her face with her hands, then feeling the strength of a giant, and doing what he did.

Peter had been nervously looking at his watch, and now he bowed, and said, —

"I am very sorry, missus, to intercept de pleasant flow of de stream of de conversation wid Mr. Krinkle, but I should ascertain dat de intermission had been going on quite as long as is advisable, considering dat de equal abraham of his system is not completely restored."

"You are very thoughtful, Peter. I have been so interested in what Mr. Krinkle has been saying that I did not know we had been here so long. It is quite time for us to go," said Aunt Janet, rising.

"I fear that we have tired you," said Bertha.

"Oh, no ; I feel stronger already for your visit, and shall hope to see you again whenever you can make it convenient to come."

"We shall certainly darken your doors very often," said Aunt Janet.

"Fill my chamber with light, rather," Caleb replied as they passed out.

How blissful to lie upon his soft bed and think of what had happened; to go back over the years to that first moment when he beheld Bertha beneath the maples in the sugar orchard; of that slide down the hill, his head almost resting on her shoulder; of that ambrosial night when he led her triumphantly into the Copenhagen fortress; of the catastrophe to Moses in the race, their ride in the moonlight, and now, after all the years, this new and wonderful outcome of events!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MOSES BURNS THE MIDNIGHT GAS.

THE young attorney and counsellor-at-law, Moses Meek, Jr., having well-furnished apartments at the West End, and an office in Pemberton square, was down town burning the midnight gas. He was not in his office preparing a brief, but in an upper chamber in a building situated on a narrow alley. The window shutters in the chamber were closed, for Moses and the gentlemen who were burning the gas with him did not care to have the police poking their noses into the apartment to see what was going on there from midnight till morning.

When Moses turned into the alley on his way to the chamber, he took a look in several directions to see if the police were in the vicinity, and having satisfied himself that they were not, gave three pulls to the bell-knob, when the door, as if understanding that he wanted to be taken in, unfastened itself. Ascending the stairs, Moses entered the chamber and sat down with the gentlemen already there to a table covered with a green cloth, with the gas flaming above him, and gave close attention to a little game of cards. So interesting was the game that he followed it till nearly daybreak, paying no heed to the rumbling of the market-wagons that were coming in from

the country, or to the wind coming in from the sea, rattling the shutters and whistling at the key-holes.

It was almost morning when Moses, having burned gas enough for one night, descended the stairs, turned into the alley, dodged hastily round a corner, and passed into Court street. No policeman was in sight. The wind alone confronted him. It swept past him, came back and danced around him, twirled his whiskers, thrust its fingers through his hair, breathed in his face, laughed in his ears, and then rushed on, rattling doors, slamming blinds, and twisting the limbs from the trees.

Moses was in no mood to be laughed at, for an ill wind had crept up stairs into the chamber and played the mischief with him there. He was a good deal out of pocket. The wind, as if knowing it, was taunting him. "Ha! ha! ha!" it laughed. It became rude to him, and knocked his hat into the gutter, and gave it a kick down the hill, bowling it along so fast that Moses could not quite keep up with it. Several times he had it almost within his grasp, when the wind gave it another whirl. Moses, from having burned the gas so long, with considerable whiskey to keep him in spirits, was a little unsteady in his legs, but after a spirited chase, captured the hat, and found it dripping with mud. He put it on his head, however, and jammed it down, laying several heavy oaths upon the crown, as the people of Switzerland put stones on the roofs of their houses to keep them in place.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the wind again from the opposite corner, where it had been watching him. Then the rain slapped him in the face, beat a tattoo upon his back, and pelted him all the way to his home. He blundered up stairs and entered his bed-chamber. He was wet and cold and out of sorts. In order to warm himself, he took

a large glass of whiskey; and to get into sorts, tumbled into bed.

It was eleven o'clock when Moses awoke. There was a pain in his head. He pulled the crimson tassel of the bell-cord that hung against the wall by the head of the bed. There was a faint tinkling of a bell in the basement, and soon after a sound of boots upon the stairs, and then the door of his room opened and a colored boy entered.

"Did you ring?"

"Of course I did, you black rascal. I want a bottle of soda water and my breakfast."

The boy disappeared, and after a few minutes' absence, returned with the soda, a plate of toast, a boiled egg and a cup of coffee.

Moses drank the soda and nibbled a bit of toast, but had no appetite for the egg. His head ached. He wrapped a wet towel around his brow and curled down into bed again. An hour's sleep, with the soda and towel, refreshed him.

It was past noon, however, when he arose, and he was not even then altogether in sorts. The sight of his hat bedrabbled with mud, and his wet clothes, brought to mind the experience of the night, the recollection of which was not agreeable. The pictures upon the walls, although by French artists, for the moment had no power to charm him; nor was he inclined to read any of the French novels that were lying on the table. He lighted a cigar, and while puffing it, gave himself up to reflection.

Things were not going to suit him. He had had a rascally run of luck. He was several hundred dollars out of pocket.

But there was a more important matter to be taken into consideration,—the prospective relations between himself and Miss Bertha Wayland. The acquaintance formed at

Hilltown had ripened into friendship. He had been a frequent visitor at the Wayland mansion, and had been cordially received by Bertha and Aunt Janet. He had been their escort on many occasions at Saratoga and Newport, and flattered himself that Bertha had a tender regard for him, for had she not many times accepted his arm in the promenade when other gentlemen stood waiting to render all possible attention? Had she not strolled with him on the beach at Newport and listened with rapture to his recitations of poetry? And although she had been the bright star of society at Washington, there had been no visible abatement of her friendship. Yet he could see that a change was taking place in her. She was becoming thoughtful and reserved. Why, he did not know, nor could he surmise a reason. But the time evidently had come for him to make sure of the prize within his reach. He was to dine at the Wayland mansion that very evening, upon invitation, and he would improve the opportunity to have a private interview with Bertha and declare his love.

If we wonder at the self-assurance of Moses, in aspiring to obtain possession of the heart and hand and fortune of Bertha, we are not to forget that Sir George Crumpet, an admiral in the Navy, a senator from Out West, to say nothing of Lieutenant Spoony, and many others, had fully persuaded themselves that Bertha was necessary to their happiness. Without her they would be forever miserable, with her they would be supremely happy.

The rain on this stormy day was driving against the windows of the Wayland mansion, and the wind sighing through the casements. It was a ceaseless monody pitched on a minor key. It came from the sea, and as Bertha listened to it during the day she thought of the ships that were ashore

on the rocks of Nahant, which she had read about in the morning papers ; she thougnt of the dashing surf, the blinding spray, the thundering of the waves, of the men that were clinging to the rigging, shouting for help to those on shore, who were powerless to aid them ; of the going out of hope. How sad ! how terrible ! She walked the parlor, looked out into the storm, and saw the trees upon the Common bending before the blast, and the gulls, driven inward, flying before the wind. It was a lonely morning. There were few carriages in the street, and not many passers-by. There was nothing but rain and mist and low hanging clouds and gloom without, and deeper gloom within. The heavy folds of the curtains shut out the day. She lighted the chandelier, but its flickering flames were but a travesty upon the sun. It was artificial day.

"It is as artificial as my life has been," Bertha said to herself as she sat there beholding it.

She ran her fingers over the piano and began a concerto, but it was like a child's drumming, — soulless sound. She came to a dead stop in the middle of the first movement, tossed the music aside, closed the piano, walked into the library, and ran her eyes over the volumes upon the shelves. There were history, biography, travels, novels, art and science, but nothing that she wished to read, — nothing that could dispel the gloom. There came a thought : —

"If so gloomy the day to me, what must it be to *him ?*"

She was thinking of Caleb, — "the caged young eagle," as Doctor Tragacanth had called him, up stairs still, but well enough to come down and dine with herself and Aunt Janet, as he did every day, and yet who must have many more weeks of rest before he could apply himself to study. How very dull it must be to him, physically well, but not able to use his brain after the violent concussion

he had received. She sat down to the table, wrote a note, and sent it by Peter to Mr. Krinkle's room. Thus it read: —

"*Down-stairs*, 11 A.M.

"MR. KRINKLE: —

"Aunt Janet is busy in her room. Come down, please, if you can, and help me drive the gloom out of the house.

"BERTHA."

He could not refuse such a request, and at once descended the stairs.

"I am glad that you have come down, Mr. Krinkle," said Bertha, meeting him in the hall. "I am lonesome to-day, and I thought that if the day was gloomy to me, it must be very dreary to you, up there all alone."

"It never occurred to me that I was alone, having lived by myself so much during the last five years," he replied.

"You must be a stoic or else a philosopher. I have been listening to the wind, and it has been horribly dismal. It gave me the blues. I have been just as miserable as I could be all the morning."

"Don't you think that you could have been just a shade more unhappy, if you had brought your mind to bear upon the question?"

The absurdity of her remark flashed upon her, and she could not refrain from laughing. The laugh and the sight of his cheerful face restored her drooping spirits.

"It was so gloomy that I lighted the gas, but now that you have come I will turn it off," she said, extinguishing the light.

"I always knew that there was a great deal of nonsense about me, but never till this moment have I thought of competing with the gas company," said Caleb.

"Excuse me, I really did not mean to make light of you."

"Your retort is most excellent for the production of light."

"O Mr. Krinkle, your scintillations are too brilliant for me."

The sparkling words were sufficient to restore Bertha to her usual flow of spirits

"Although the day is so stormy, I trust that it will be a pleasant evening to you, Mr. Krinkle. I have arranged for a small dinner-party, and among the guests whom you will have the pleasure of meeting will be your old schoolmate, Mr. Meek," she remarked.

"Indeed!"

She did not say, "Moses informed me a twelvemonth ago that you were low down in the world," but she remembered that when she first saw Caleb in Millbrook, he was Moses' equal in every respect, and the thought had come to her that it would be natural for him to be discouraged under the circumstances which surrounded him; it was her duty, therefore, and it would be a pleasure to encourage him. It occurred to her that the object might be gained by inviting both to a small dinner-party.

"I am grateful to you, Miss Wayland, for your thoughtfulness and regard for my happiness, but I am afraid that my presence will detract from the pleasure of the company."

He did not say that he did not wish to meet Moses; he had no objection on that account, but thought it possible that something might happen, — or that there would be a rising of ghosts that would make it an unpleasant occasion to herself.

"Your presence will make it all the more enjoyable, I

am sure. Those who are to be my guests are my intimate friends ; they all know what a narrow escape I had from a terrible end, and they will esteem it an honor to make your acquaintance. It will give me great pleasure to introduce you to them."

Caleb could not doubt that she had arranged the dinner-party with the view of helping him on in the world, and he could not do otherwise than accept the invitation.

Then Bertha sang and played. It was no longer soulless music, but melody and harmony together filled the house.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BERTHA'S DINNER PARTY.

A CARRIAGE stopped in front of the Wayland mansion, and the driver, sheltered from the storm by his India rubber coat and cap, jumped down from his seat and rang the bell. Old Peter opened the door and held an umbrella over the head of Mr. Moses Meek, Jr., as he passed from the carriage to the portico and into the hall.

"I should apprehend, sah, dat it was very boistorious and fluergent out of doors to-day, sah," said Peter.

"Very fluergent indeed, Peter. If you had hunted the dictionary through from one end to the other, you could not have found a more expressive word," Moses replied while taking off his overcoat. He had seen Peter so many times that they talked freely together.

"Tank you, sah. I try to 'spress myself 'cording to de rules and regulations of de dictionary, and am glad to know dat I am not altogether an ignorant ramus, sah, as some gemmen in my speer show themselves to be, sah."

"Of course you are not, Peter. You are an ornament to society, and we could not possibly get along without you."

Moses went into the dressing-room, took a look in the glass to see if his necktie was all right, and if he had crumpled his hair since leaving the barber's. He turned to the right and left to see if there was a wrinkle in his coat that needed

smoothing, and brushed his whiskers with a self-satisfied air. He then glanced around the room, noticed the paintings, the superbly illustrated volumes on the table, the clock upon the mantle, and the thought came to him that it would be worth while to be at the head of such an establishment, to enjoy its comforts, to look after the mortgages, to cut the coupons from the bonds. He was only imitating the milkmaid in the fable, and counting his chickens before they were hatched.

Very cordial was the greeting Moses received from Bertha when he descended to the parlor. The worn and weary look which her friends had noticed when she returned from her winter's round of pleasure at Washington no longer rested on her face, but freshness and brightness instead.

"Although it is so stormy, you have the flush of the dawn on your cheeks and the light of the stars in your eyes," said Moses.

"There, there, don't, please! You know that I haven't," Bertha replied.

Moses was intending to say something more, but the arrival of other guests prevented.

Notwithstanding the storm, the guests did not wish to forego the pleasure of dining at the Wayland mansion. They knew that the Wayland dinner-parties were not dull affairs, for Bertha herself had the ability to make them brilliant.

Among the guests on this occasion were Judge Mandamus and Mrs. Mandamus, and there was a large man, somewhat past the middle of life, with the crow's-feet showing themselves in the corners of his eyes, — Professor Linguist. The stupidest of parties could not fail of being brilliant if he were present. He could speak a dozen languages with fluency, and besides being a philologist, was thoroughly versed in science. No matter what the theme of conversation, Professor Linguist was sure of saying something that would be instructive and entertaining.

There was a modest and retiring young man, Mr. Minim, a contributor to the magazines, who had also written some short poems that had gone the rounds of the newspapers. There were but two young ladies, Miss Whitewood, an artist, whose fruit and flower pieces were the admiration of all who beheld them, and Miss Rosenstein, a charming singer from Germany.

Caleb was in his chamber. He could see from his window the arrival of coaches, bringing Bertha's guests. As the dinner-hour approached, his heart began to fail him, and he wished he could plead a valid excuse for not going down. Not being accustomed to the amenities of society, he might expose himself to ridicule and be the means of mortifying Bertha. While trying to hunt up an excuse, Peter made his appearance and informed him that dinner was ready, and he descended to the parlor, where Bertha, Aunt Janet and the guests were assembled.

"There is no need that I should introduce two old friends," said Bertha, as Caleb entered the apartment and stood face to face with Moses.

Moses had not contemplated such a meeting. He had not thought it among the possibilities that Caleb, though in her house, would be invited to a select dinner-party.

Caleb bowed, held out his hand, and said, "How do you do, Mr. Meek?"

It is not easy to refuse an offered hand, even from one whom we do not like, and Moses, before he was aware of what he was doing, found himself shaking the hand of his old schoolmate, and saying, "How do you do, Caleb?" He was vexed with himself the next moment, however, for having done it. Bertha presented Caleb to the other guests, and he received their hearty congratulations.

"I esteem it an honor to make your acquaintance," said

Judge Mandamus, "for it is always an honor to be acquainted with a man who does a noble act."

Bertha had an individuality of character, that made her mistress of her own establishment. She had asserted her rights, and Aunt Janet had conceded them. She directed affairs about the house and presided at the dinner-table.

Peter appeared in the doorway and made a low salutation to his mistress.

"Dinner is ready," said Bertha; then turning to Caleb, took his arm, saying, "May I ask you to be my escort?"

Judge Mandamus offered his arm to Miss Rosenstein; Professor Linguist begged to be allowed to escort Aunt Janet, while Mr. Minim, being engaged in conversation with Miss Whitewood at the moment, invited her to accompany him. Moses had no alternative but to be the escort of Mrs. Mandamus, who, being rather hard of hearing, was not very entertaining company. He bowed graciously, however, offered the lady his arm, and they passed out to the dining-room.

Bertha understood the art of giving elegant dinners, and her success did not lie in the great number of courses served or in strange compounds of food, but in having among her guests those who would entertain the company by solid sense or the sparkle of wit and easy flow of conversation. On this occasion Professor Linguist entertained them while soup and fish were being served by giving an account of the festive scenes of the Romans in the time of Nero.

"Mr. Meek, I will ask you to carve for us," said Bertha, when the next course was brought in, — a turkey. Moses was dexterous in shuffling cards, but not with the carving-knife. He had seen turkeys carved many times, but never had thought it worth while to study the anatomy of the

fowl, or to notice particularly how it ought to be dismembered.

"Please excuse me, Miss Wayland; carving is not one of my accomplishments," said Moses. But Peter had already placed the fowl before him. What should he do? To refuse outright would hardly be respectful, and he could not quite afford to do any thing that would lower himself in Miss Wayland's estimation at that moment; and yet his attempt to carve might end in an ignominious failure.

"I will do my best," he said, bowing and seizing the knife and fork. He was not quite certain where to begin, whether with the legs or wings, but concluded to commence with the legs. He was not successful, however, in hitting the joints, and unfortunately soiled the table-cloth. The blood rushed to his face, and he blushed all the more deeply when he saw Judge Mandamus watching his bungling efforts.

"You see, Miss Wayland," he said, "that I spoke truly. I am ashamed to confess it, but really I don't know how to carve, and with your permission I will let Peter take it to Mr. Krinkle. He has had so much experience in carving for the public that he of course will do it to perfection."

Every eye was turned toward Caleb. Judge Mandamus glanced first toward Caleb and then looked inquiringly at Moses, as if to ascertain what might be the meaning of the brutal thrust. Miss Rosenstein, not fully understanding the idioms of the English language, stared in blank amazement, while Bertha bit her lip. None knew what to make of it.

Not a muscle of Caleb's face moved. The color did not come to his cheeks, nor did the blood go out of them. He waited for some one to break the silence. There were years of discipline in that one moment of composure.

"Mr. Krinkle, may I ask you to do the honors of the table?" Bertha asked.

"I shall be happy to serve you," was the calm reply.

Peter placed the turkey before him.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I accept the honor which Miss Wayland has conferred upon me. The circumstances of my life during the past few years have been such that I have been compelled, while acquiring an education, to earn my daily bread, which I have done by serving food to others, and it will give me pleasure to serve you."

The Judge gazed upon him with admiration. He appreciated the manliness which Caleb had exhibited, and said to himself, "The young man who can make such a speech as that under such circumstances will make his way in life." Professor Linguist, being a naturalist as well as a philologist, and knowing the anatomy of the fowl, watched with manifest signs of pleasure the skill which Caleb displayed in carving, and began an interesting talk upon the anatomy of different fowls, — the difference between the bones of a turkey and those of a goose. He then gave a dissertation on the adaptation of means to ends and the manifestation of intelligent thought throughout the realm of nature.

There was no longer occasion for Bertha to bite her lip, for Caleb was master of the situation, his part having been performed to perfection. In her kindness, she did what she could to make it an agreeable occasion to Moses, who, with a deaf old lady to be entertained, and his failure to perform the honors of the table, and the consciousness that he had made a mistake in giving a brutal and uncalled for thrust at Caleb, was ill at ease.

The dinner over, and the party adjourned to the parlor, where they were served with coffee. While sipping it, Judge Mandamus entertained the company with anecdotes of the

Bench and Bar, and then Miss Rosenstein sang and played.

Mr. Minim, in response to Bertha's request, consented to read a few stanzas of his own composing.

"My early life," he remarked, "was passed in the country, and I have put into verse some of the recollections that haunt me. I had a poem in contemplation once, but it never will be written; these stanzas are but a fragment. For want of a better title I call them "Memory's Pictures."

"It is a pleasure to throw back the door,
And view the treasures of departed hours;
To brush the cobwebs from the ancient lore,
And turn again the book of gathered flowers.

"How bright the fire, blazing on the hearth!
What merry shouts fall on the ear again!
And little footsteps patter down the path,
Just like the coming of the summer rain.

"I hear the music of the rippling rill,
The dews of morn are sprinkled on my cheek,
While down the valley and upon the hill
The laughing echoes play their hide-and-seek.

"I roam the meadows where the violets grow,
And watch the shadows o'er the mountain creep,
I bathe my feet where sparkling fountains flow,
Or bow my head on moss-grown rocks to sleep.

"Within those pleasant chambers of the past
Old pictures hang upon the pannelled walls;
And phantom forms are in the twilight cast,
While song and dance are sounding through the halls.

"The deep-toned bell rings out the passing hour,
I hear its music o'er the valley flung;
Oh, what a preacher is that time-stained tower,
Reading great sermons with its iron tongue!

"The old church clock, forever swinging slow,
With golden hands at morning and at even,
Points to the sleepers in the yard below,
Then lifts them upward to the distant heaven."

But the carriages came for the guests, and one by one they took their departure. Caleb was weary, and ascended to his chamber. Aunt Janet asked to be excused, and retired to her room, leaving Moses and Bertha alone in the parlor. Moses was aware that he had made a mistake at the dinner-table, and wished to efface any unfavorable impression that might have been created in Bertha's mind in regard to his character as a gentleman, and therefore exerted himself to the utmost. He was affable. He could recite poetry effectively. His range of reading had been wide, and he narrated his choicest stories and gave utterance to briliant apothegms and witticisms. The propitious hour which he had anticipated had arrived. They were alone. The hands of the clock were moving on toward the midnight hour. He flattered himself that Bertha had altogether forgotten his momentary want of gentility. He would broach the subject he had in mind.

"Miss Wayland," he said, "may I take this opportunity to say a few words to you?"

"Certainly," Bertha replied, thinking that possibly he might wish to apologize for what had occurred at the table.

"I have for a long time felt an ardent desire to make known my special regards for you," he said, in a low voice. "For a long while I have admired you, and, I may say, been an adorer of your worth and beauty."

Bertha did not listen altogether in amazement, for she had heard gentlemen at Saratoga, Newport, Washington and in Boston make similar addresses. She knew what he would say, and fain would prevent him.

"Please do not say any thing more, Mr. Meek," she said.

If he had scanned her face, or but noticed the deprecatory movement of her hand, he would have heeded the request, but he proceeded.

"Ever since we were at Hilltown, even from our first meeting, I have thought of you as the one almost celestial being who alone could fill my life with happiness."

"Let us understand each other, Mr. Meek, now and always. We are old schoolmates and friends, and that is all we ever can be."

"May I never hope to enter upon a more endearing relation?"

"We never can be more than friends."

"Is it possible that I have been deluded through all these years,—led on by your friendship to be rejected at the last?" said Moses with bitterness.

"Excuse me, Mr. Meek, but I am not conscious of having encouraged you to think of me as any thing more than a friend. I am sorry if you have thought of me in any other light, but, if you please, we will dismiss the subject now and forever."

Bertha spoke with a deliberation, decision and dignity from which there was no appeal. Moses sat in silence, but with a flushed face, which grew in redness as the silence became prolonged. He was confused, but Bertha sat composedly.

"I bow to your mandate," he said at length, rising to depart. Good-evening, Miss Wayland."

"Good-evening, Mr. Meek. I shall always be pleased to see you as a friend."

Moses put on his coat, and without waiting for a carriage, went out into the rain. His reflections as he walked home, and while sitting in his chamber, were very bitter. As on the

previous night, he had played a losing game. The great prize he had hoped to win, which he had made up his mind to win, had slipped through his fingers. At the dinner-table he had made an ignominious failure, while Caleb had achieved a triumph, and he resolved that that beggar and upstart who had thus crossed his path should smart for it. But in what way? He drank a glass of whiskey, lighted a cigar, and sat down to think about it. After reflecting awhile, he opened his writing-desk and wrote a letter to Bell Blossom.

It was a chatty letter, — a very nice letter Bell thought, when she received it, not knowing that behind its apparent innocence was the trail of the devil. What mattered it to him if in hitting Caleb he stabbed Linda to the heart?

Nothing.

CHAPTER XXX.

MOSES COOKS CALEB'S GOOSE.

LINDA sat in the recess of the bay-window timing the rhythm of her sewing-machine to a song that she was singing. The humming-birds came and thrust their bills into the blossoms of the scarlet runners that were climbing around the casement, and hovered a moment in the air, looking at her with their bright eyes as if to say, "We thank you for the privilege," and then darted away. The swallows sat on the window-sill and twittered an accompaniment to her song. Why should she not sing, when in the drawer before her were letters from Caleb, which, like the gospel of John, were filled with promises and overflowing with love. These were the sentences that lived in memory:—

"Like a candle ever burning before a holy shrine, so is my love to you."

"I think of your love as the light of a star that never sets."

"I know a little flower blooming on a distant hillside that is sweeter than all the exotics in the conservatories around me."

And the two stanzas which came in one of Caleb's letters were ever in her mind and on her tongue, for Linda had set them to a simple melody.

This was the song she was ever singing: —

"Oft as I walk the crowded street
Throughout the livelong day,
Amid the ceaseless tramp of feet
I ever hear your true heart beat,
Although so far away.

"As roving ships return from sea
And anchor by the shore,
So will I hasten soon to thee,
And blissful then, my love, shall be
Our lives forevermore."

Although there were but two stanzas, they contained, as it were, the whole gospel of love. With such a psalm to cheer and comfort her, she could be happy all day long. Her future was without a cloud. All other men in the world might falter when they should be firm and steadfast, but Caleb would be true. The rivers might cease to flow, but his love would abide forever. She was ever thinking of his goodness. Had he not written to her of the friends he had found among the poor? And it was a pleasure to know that he had shown his nobility in rescuing from a terrible death that sweet girl, Bertha Wayland.

Caleb had written her an account of it as soon as his strength permitted. Linda rejoiced that a Providential hand had led him toward the falling building at the moment when he was needed, and wished that she could see Bertha, to thank her for the tender care she had bestowed upon him.

On a bright afternoon, Bell, having finished a game of croquet with some of her friends, called upon Linda. She had received a letter from Moses, and it contained some information which she could use to advantage in teasing

Linda. It was a pleasure to Bell to stick pins, metaphorical pins, into her friends, to torment them a little, and then ask their forgiveness.

"You can't guess who this is from," said Bell, showing the back side of a letter.

"Then I won't try."

"It is from somebody you know."

"Moses?"

"Yes; but you can't guess what he says about somebody."

"If he says any thing and says the truth, it is that somebody is good."

"I knew you would say that."

"How so?"

"Because you always say it. You think there isn't anybody in the world like Caleb."

"There isn't, to me."

"Oh, you conceited thing! you think that your jewel is a real diamond, and that the rest of us must put up with quartz. Perhaps you will find out that yours is only paste."

"Oh, no, I shall not: Caleb is true and good and noble."

"So you think; but perhaps you will change your tune one of these days."

"He has proved true thus far, and how noble it was in him to rescue Bertha as he did!"

"Very; but who knows what may come of it?"

"What may come of what?"

"Who knows but that Bertha may steal him away from you?"

"I am not afraid of that. She can't steal what won't be stolen."

"Don't be too sure, puss. Men are strange creatures; they change their minds sometimes."

"Caleb won't change."

"Won't he?"

"No."

"What will you give to know what Moses says about it?"

"It will make no difference to me, whatever he may have said. I am glad that Caleb rescued Bertha, and that he is in her beautiful home, where he can have the best of care."

"It is all very nice for you to say that; but just hear what Moses says."

Bell opened the letter and read:—

"Caleb is in clover. He couldn't possibly have any more attentions than he receives. He has an old white-headed nigger to wait upon him."

"I am glad of it," Linda said.

Bell went on:—

"Bertha thinks that he is a hero: that there isn't anybody in the world like him."

"And there isn't!" Linda exclaimed.

"She worships him. I used to think that I stood well in Bertha's good graces. I flirted with her at Saratoga and Newport, promenaded and danced with her, recited poetry to her by the seaside; but Caleb has cut me out. Who knows but that we shall see him as rich as Crœsus? I dined with Bertha yesterday. It was a distinguished party: there was Judge Mandamus, and Professor Linguist, and a young poet who is making his mark in the literary world; and would you believe it, Bertha ignored them all, gave her arm to Caleb, and asked him to do the honors of the table! I see plainly that it is all up with me."

"Now, Miss Confidence, what do you say to that?"

"I think that it was very noble in Bertha to show Caleb so much attention."

"Why, you are as blind as a bat! Would Bertha show him so much attention before such a distinguished company if she did not mean something by it?"

Bell wanted the pin to prick just a little, and it did; but Linda was not at a loss for a reply.

"I suppose she wanted to show the company that she was grateful for what Caleb had done," she replied.

"But gratitude may become something else. It looks as if Bertha was over head and ears in love with Caleb."

It was a vigorous push of the metaphorical pin, and it went through all the philosophy which Linda had wrapped around her and left its little wound.

"Bertha may be in love with Caleb, but I don't think that he will turn away from me."

Linda said it with trembling lips. In a moment Bell's arms were around her.

"There, there, Little Maid, don't feel bad about it; you know I only said it to tease you. Of course Caleb won't turn away from you. It is only some of Moses' nonsense, that I have read to you."

So Bell, having inflicted the wound, tried to soothe away the pain, but the wound was there nevertheless.

"Now, Linda darling, tell me what I must do."

"About what?"

"About Moses. He is coming home in a day or two, and father and mother don't like him, but he will come to see me and will ask me to ride with him."

"And you will do it, because you love him."

"I know it. I always have loved him. Father says that Moses isn't steady, and he don't want me to have any-

thing to do with him, but how can I help it? He is handsome, and he ain't so very bad, I guess, after all."

"I don't think that I am able to give you advice, Bell. We must each decide for curselves what is right and what we ought to do. If my father and mother were living I should do what I could to make their lives happy. Are you sure that Moses loves you and is worthy of you?"

"He says that he loves me, and how can I doubt him? If he loves me, won't he make my life happy? I know that he is a little wild, but he'll settle down and be steady enough by-and-by, — they all do."

"No, not all, Bell."

"Perhaps I shall make him steady; I am so steady myself," said Bell with a laugh.

"Please don't do any thing hastily, nor any thing that you will repent of by-and-by, Bell, that is all the advice I can give you."

"O Linda! I only wish I was as wise and good as you are, but I ain't. I've always had my own way, and I am always doing some foolish thing or other and then repenting of it," Bell replied, as she took her departure.

At this midsummer season, when everybody who was not at the seashore was going to the mountains, Peter Smart had no lack of passengers.

There came a day when Moses Meek was a passenger. He was polite to the ladies, helped them down to the ground whenever the stage stopped to change horses, brought them glasses of water, and raised his hat to them with great deference, and quoted Byron, and Tom Moore. The young ladies were sorry when he bade them adieu at the Flying Eagle: they had hoped he was going on to the mountains.

Moses had returned to Millbrook to recruit his energies, wasted and worn by sitting up late into the night, engaged in the study of perplexing law cases, — as he would have his friends understand. It was not an attractive home to which he had returned. No mother greeted him. Mrs. Meek had packed her trunk and returned to her father, while Mr. Meek, though living in New Hampshire, by applying to the courts of Indiana had obtained a divorce.

Having taken a look at his home, Moses called upon Bell for a few moments and then went up the hill to pay his respects to Linda, who was at her sewing-machine when he entered, and did not hear his step till his hand rested on her shoulder.

"O Moses! how you have frightened me. Where did you come from?"

"Right from the centre of all creation."

"When did you leave Boston?"

"This morning."

"Are you well?"

"Pretty well; but rather tired. The profession of law is very exacting. If I had known how hard it is, I wouldn't have chosen it."

"Bell told me that you were coming, but did not say when. You will spend some weeks at home, I suppose?"

"That will depend upon circumstances. Millbrook is a slow-coach-of-a place, but if there is any fun to be had, I may stop through August."

"Have you seen Caleb of late?"

"Oh, yes, it was only last week."

"How is he?"

"Quite well, I thought; at any rate, he was well enough to do the honors at Miss Wayland's little dinner-party."

"Bell read me what you wrote about it."

"Did she read it to you? then I need not repeat it."

There was a pleased expression on Moses' face. His plan had worked well. He had written an account of the party to Bell with the expectation that it would be read to Linda.

"Miss Wayland evidently thinks there is nobody in the world like Caleb. I half suspect that she gave the dinner that her particular friends Judge Mandamus and Professor Linguist might make the acquaintance of the young hero, who possibly may be at the head of her establishment one of these days."

Linda was startled. Moses saw it and went on.

"At any rate, Caleb is in luck. There are a score of young dogs at Boston, to say nothing of men old enough to be Miss Wayland's father, who would give all their old boots to be in Caleb's shoes about this time."

"Of course Miss Wayland is grateful to him," Linda remarked.

"You must use a stronger word, Linda. She loves him, or else I am mistaken. From the present indications it would seem that there is to be a romance in high life."

"Oh, no; Caleb would not be a party to such a romance."

"Wouldn't? eh! What a dear, honest, simple-hearted creature you are, Linda. Do you not recall her beauty? and she is more beautiful now than when you last saw her. You must not forget that she is very rich. There are not many men who can turn away from such attractions. Do you think that Caleb will be an exception, especially when he sees that Miss Wayland is ready to lay herself, her wealth, her beauty at his feet? Caleb an exception? Not much!"

"I think that he will prove true," said Linda, but her

hands were clasped upon her heart at the moment. She could not deny the general truth of what Moses had said, that men are attracted by beauty and riches, though she was sure that Caleb would not be.

"Time and distance conquer love, it is said. Don't be too sanguine of the future, Linda."

"I have no reason to think that Caleb has changed in his feelings toward me. He promised to come to me, and I shall wait for him."

"I admire your faith in human nature, Linda, but you don't know it. Look at both sides of the question, as we lawyers say. On the one side, matchless beauty, great riches, position in society, and a girl dead in love with him, and on the other — yourself."

Linda covered her face with her hands. She saw herself a poor girl, earning her daily bread, and taking care of Winifred. Winifred! Perhaps Caleb would think of the child as an incumbrance in the future. She carried on the contrast which Moses had held up to her. If Caleb came back to her he would find only a loving heart and willing hands, nothing more; but there before him, held out to him, were ease, comfort, riches, position in society, and the love of a warm-hearted girl who owed her life to him. There was a sinking of the heart as she contemplated it.

"I am sorry, Linda, that you feel so bad about it, but disappointments come to us all."

Moses had accomplished what he had intended, and took his departure. Nor was he troubled at seeing the anguish of a wounded spirit. He had been humiliated by what had occurred at the dinner-party. Bertha had rejected him, and if he could by any means destroy Linda's confidence in Caleb, it would be sweet revenge

and a paying off of old scores. There was a sardonic smile upon his face as he passed down the street, saying to himself, "I have begun to cook his goose for him, and I mean to do it up brown."

CHAPTER XXXI.

A DAY AT NAHANT.

BERTHA WAYLAND planned a little excursion to Nahant. She thought that the sea would invigorate Mr. Krinkle. At least, he would have a change of scene. Doctor Tragacanth said it would be an excellent tonic. The party consisted of herself, Aunt Janet, Professor Linguist and Mr. Krinkle, besides Peter, who was instructed to put up a lunch, which they would eat upon the rocks.

It was but a half-hour's ride to Lynn, and another half hour by coach to the long and level beach.

The summer airs were blowing softly. They brought the fragrance of newly-mown hay from the fields, and mingled it with the odors born of the deep. The mid-day sun threw down its beaming rays and paved a wide and level avenue across the waves with silver light. A few white clouds came down from the west, sailed out to sea, and were lost to sight; but landward or seaward, there was nothing to mar the sweetness, the beauty, the and peace of the perfect day.

The tide was out, and the waves were spreading their white fringes on the bleaching sand, and the coachman walked his horses along the crescent shore.

"Many times have I seen the sea," said Bertha, "but never when it was so beautiful as it is to-day. How pleas-

ant! I would rather walk than ride. Will you keep me company, Mr. Krinkle?"

"With pleasure."

They descended from the carriage and walked along the beach, while Aunt Janet and the Professor, with Peter on the seat with the driver, went on.

"We will join you on the rocks," said Bertha, as they whirled away.

"The waves are bowing a welcome to us," she said.

"And spreading their white mantles upon the sand for you, as Sir Walter Raleigh threw down his cloak for Queen Elizabeth," Caleb replied.

"Excuse me, but I don't think that your comparison is a good one," said Bertha, who had a very kind and gentle but decided way of expressing her dissent upon any subject.

"Why, may I ask?"

"Because Queen Elizabeth, by stepping on Raleigh's cloak, walked dry shod, but if I were to step on these white mantles I should wet my feet."

"I did not think of that," Caleb replied.

He had intended it for a compliment, and was rather chagrined to find that his allusion was rhetorically imperfect.

"That is not all. Raleigh was only a weak courtier to a proud and haughty queen: I am not a queen, — only a girl; and the sea, — there is nothing to which you can liken it."

So his fine compliment was torn to tatters.

And so they strolled leisurely, picking the delicate mosses that had been left on the beach by the receding tide. There was no reason why they should hurry. An ambitious wave, as if to show what it could do, like an athlete in the

ring, ran up to catch her by the feet. With a scream and laugh she sprang away; and then, like a child giving a dare, followed it over the dripping sands as it retired, only to be chased again in turn. So she played "Catch-me-if-you-can" with the sea, and was a child once more.

"Oh, it is so good to get away from the crowd, from fashion, a little while, and be myself! Fashion, Society, Propriety will not let us girls be ourselves. Aunt Janet tries to make me somebody else, and it troubles her because I will not be. I am Bertha Wayland, and I dare say that there is not another girl in the world like me. Now, Mr. Krinkle, if I cut up any capers to-day, I want you to understand that I haven't had a romp for a long while, and that I shall only be showing myself just as I am."

When a wave came up, she gave him a push, as if to send him into it, and then apologized for being so rude. She challenged him to run a race. He accepted it with the intention of running an easy gait, and letting her come in a trifle ahead; it would not be gallant to do otherwise. They ran, and though he did his best, she was at the goal in advance of him, her cheeks aglow with the exhilaration of the exercise and the victory.

"I thought that I should win," she said, panting for breath, her face wreathed in smiles.

"I acknowledge myself fairly beaten; you took me by surprise."

He knew that she had decision of character: it was manifest in her taking him home to her house at the time of his injury; it was manifest in her taking direction of her own affairs; it cropped out in her conversations with those who called upon her. He could but admire her frankness in saying that she was Bertha Wayland and no-

body else ; but her vivacity was a surprise. He saw that there was energy and power behind it, and understood why it was that Aunt Janet could not make her a Porgie. She could only be herself. And what a self it was! Peerless in her beauty, a star in society, admired, flattered, and yet her own true self!

They sat down upon the dry sand and looked at the shells she had gathered, and then watched the ships that were sailing past. They were near enough to the rocks to hear the waves as they surged against them.

"Shall I recite to you the most perfect sea-song ever written?" Caleb asked.

"Yes, please. What is it?"

"It is Tennyson's, and to my way of thinking, there is not in literature a song of the sea so perfect in all its parts as —

'Break, break, break !
On thy cold gray stones, O sea.'"

"Oh, do recite it, please."

The waves were breaking at their feet ; they could hear their multitudinous voices along the shore ; the ships were sailing by ; the boats were rocking in the bay ; they could hear the fishermen shouting to their comrades ; and so the poem became a reality.

"Thank you!" she said, her eyes filling with tears at the allusion to the "touch of a vanished hand." She was thinking of a hand that had vanished — her father's.

"I know not why it is, but the sea makes me sad," she said. "I cannot comprehend it. Its vastness and its mightiness overwhelms me."

"Perhaps because it is a type of the Infinite and Eternal," Caleb suggested.

"When I was at Hilltown," said Bertha, "I used to go into the fields and sit by a gurgling brook, to hear its laughter, but there is no laughter here. There is something inexpressibly mournful in this slow and steady beating of the heart of the sea. Each wave seems to say as it breaks upon the beach, 'I have come, and now I go, and you never will see me again.' They are like the generations of men that show themselves for a moment on the shore of time and then disappear in the great oblivion. And then the waves are so restless that they weary me. They are never still, but ever hurrying on, and my life is like them; a hurrying on, — and for what? I wish that I had something to hurry for. It makes me sad to look at them, because they roll to some purpose, — they bear the ships across the sea, while I am doing nothing. If I were to disappear from the scene to-day, it would be like the going down of a freightless ship."

She walked away by herself down to the verge of the water, and stood gazing seaward, with her eyes fixed upon a ship so far away, that only by straining her sight could she discern the lessening sail. Her perfect form was outlined against the horizon; the sea-breeze was playing with her hair and leaving its bright colors on her cheek. Beautiful always, but transcendently beautiful was she at the moment to Caleb, who was still sitting upon the sand, leaving her to enjoy her thickly coming fancies. She returned, and sat down again.

"It is gone. And so shall I go, and whither? O Mr. Krinkle, what is the meaning of this mystery of life? Others enjoy life, but I do not. Others are happy, but I am not. My friends find happiness in dressing, in dancing, in society, but I do not. I am weary with it all, and want to rest. I am tired of every thing; even the waves

tire me by their restlessness, and they sadden me by their measured beating. Why is it? Tell me, please."

"I have been thinking, Miss Wayland, of what you said but a few moments ago, — that you were hurrying on without a purpose, — and it has occurred to me that if you were hurrying on for *something* you would be happier than you are now."

"That is so. I am sure that I should, but I have every thing. I have more money than I can use; I have no incentive to lift my hand to any thing. Sometimes I have almost determined to go down into the kitchen, and turn Bridget out of doors, — who is saucy because I am an ignoramus in cooking, — and do it myself, just for the sake of having something to do."

"Working among stew-pans might not be altogether agreeable, but possibly it would be instructive, and might bring some degree of pleasure. There are many young ladies who, if they were to turn their attention more to the practical and less to the ornamental than they are in the habit of doing, would add to their happiness and usefulness. To me, one of the saddest features of our civilization is the aimlessness of so many of your sex in life. Pardon me if it may seem to be rude to speak of it, but so far as I can discover, the only aim of many a young lady is to obtain a husband who will be able to maintain her in society."

"I do not think it a rude remark; you have stated the case fairly, but what are you going to do with us?"

"Let me vary the question. What are you going to do with yourselves?"

"That is just what I would like to know? What *are* we? Bridget is our mistress in the kitchen as Fashion is in the parlor, and between the two millstones the flour of

society is getting a hard grind. What help is there for us?"

"Smash the mill."

"But how?"

"If all the ladies who don't know how to work were to learn, Bridget would no longer be mistress, but a servant; if they would resolve to be independent of fashion, they would no longer be slaves. I do not mean that you must all go down into the kitchen to work, day after day, or that you must put on quaker costume and never change the style; I mean that freedom lies in the ability to assert your independence. But that alone would not bring the happiness that you are longing for. There must be a lofty aim to bring true happiness to noble souls. Now what is your aim in life? What can you accomplish with your accomplishments. I put the question to your sex — not to yourself?"

"Well, let us see: we can embroider and make tattings and tidies and afghans; we play the piano, sing and dance; we play whist, read novels, and make ourselves agreeable generally," said Bertha, laughing.

"You can do all of these, and yet are dissatisfied with your attainments!"

"No sarcasm, please; I want a sober talk."

"Dissatisfaction with life has not happened to you alone, Miss Wayland. You have doubtless read of the restlessness of Sir Philip Sidney at the court of Elizabeth. You remember that he was the queen's favorite, was smiled upon by the ladies of honor, and yet was as uneasy as an eagle in a gilded cage longing to spread his wings for a heavenward flight. But out of that restlessness and longing — out of the resolution of that noble heart — came the Arcadia. He could not soar till he had an object in view, high above him."

"But who of us can write a poem like the Arcadia?"

"If you cannot write a pastoral, perhaps it is in your power to rehearse an epic in real life which will be of quite as much value to the world as a poem written in flowing numbers."

"Rehearse an epic! you are making fun of my sex. Please explain."

"Most of us have an ambition to be great, to accomplish something that will win the applause of the world, forgetting the words of the Master, 'Let him that is greatest among you be your servant.' There are lives which are poems more heroic than the 'Iliad' and nobler than 'Paradise Lost,' in that they help the helpless back into Eden. They are beautiful because they are rehearsed out of sight and far away from the applauding crowd." Caleb stopped, scarcely knowing whether or not Bertha was interested, for she was looking far away.

"Go on, please; I am like a little child. I want more," said Bertha.

"There are heroes in real life," Caleb continued, "more worthy than Agamemnon, to be crowned with unfading laurel, and heroines in out-of-the-way places, whose names are never seen in the newspapers, more worthy of honor than many of those that are emblazoned on the scroll of fame."

"Who are they, and where shall I find them?"

"They are those who have the heart and will to help those who cannot help themselves. They are angels without wings; not flying through the heavens, but walking through muddy streets on earth, climbing narrow stairs to dirty attics, or descending into dismal dens. It may be a small service that they render, but the smallest is sometimes the greatest. The two mites of the widow

were more than all the gifts of the rich, and that little poem rehearsed in the porch of the temple in Jerusalem with the carpenter of Galilee for an auditor, will be forever an inspiration to all who esteem goodness nobler than greatness. It was the heart, the will, the devotion that made it an imperishable epic, and whosoever will may repeat it. Did you ever read the quaint old poem of George Herbert?"

"No, I think not."

"I recall one stanza, which, sometimes, when I am disposed to be indolent, I repeat to myself: —

> 'Fly idleness, which yet thou canst not fly,
> By dressing, mistressing and compliment;
> If these take up thy day, the sun will cry
> Against thee, for his light is only lent.
> God gave thy soul brave wings; put not thy feathers
> Into a bed, to sleep out all its weathers.'

"Then there is a stanza of a hymn by Macduff which well describes the longing for the unattained which we experience: —

> 'Earth's fondest hopes and brightest dreams
> Are fitful, fugitive and vain;
> The best of its polluted streams
> I only drink to thirst again.'

"We may drink forever, yet never be satisfied," said Caleb.

"Thank you," you have given me something to think of," Bertha replied, still looking far away.

On such a blissful day, with so much peace in heaven, and on earth, and on the sea, they could not have the beach all to themselves; there were parties from the villages

inland, that came in great wagons, bringing their dinners, to enjoy a day upon the beach. The children paddled in the water, and picked up the shells brought in by the tide; young men and maidens walked away together, or sat upon the sand, saying to themselves, "Sweet as the day and peaceful as the sea shall be our lives."

Bertha and Caleb watched the gathering crowds awhile and then strolled on to the rocky headland, where Aunt Janet, Professor Linguist and Peter were waiting for them.

"The sea air has given me a ravenous appetite, and I hope that you have brought a good lunch, Peter," said Bertha.

"Yes, Miss Bertha, I know dat de sea is good for a cavernous appetite, and I have put in an extra supply."

"That is very good, Peter," said Bertha, laughing.

"It couldn't be better," the Professor added.

"Tank you, sah; I hope dat de repast will meet wid your 'probation, sah."

"It is from *caverna*, a hollow, a subterraneous place," said the Professor.

"Which must be filled, and, Peter, you may spread the lunch on the rocks," said Bertha. "You are a superb caterer," she added, when she saw the tempting display of cold chicken, tongue, ham, oysters, boiled eggs, French rolls, relishes, and strawberries for dessert. Knowing that Aunt Janet was fond of French coffee, Peter had kindled a fire of drift-wood on the rocks, and had put his coffee-pot on the coals, where it was sending out its appetizing fragrance.

"A superb caterer, you are," said Bertha, repeating it.

"No, Miss Bertha, I never capered in de suburbs; I have always been in de city."

While partaking of the repast, a shadow fell upon them, not of a passing cloud but of a portly woman.

"Bless my soul! Why, Caleb Krinkle! how do you do?"

It was Mrs. Gabberly, who seized him by the hand and shook it till Caleb began to think there never would be an end of the pump-handle movement.

"I am so glad to see you! How you have changed! Well, five years does make a wonderful difference in folks' looks at your age, but not much at my time of life. Who would have thought of seeing you here! But you are in good company, I see. Why, Miss Wayland! how do you do? Perhaps you don't remember me, but I remember you. I met you at Caleb's sugaring off. I'm Mrs. Gabberly."

All of this was spoken before Caleb could find his voice.

"Really, Mrs. Gabberly, this is a surprise," he replied. He did not say that he was glad to see her, for he was not, under the circumstances.

"Mrs. Gabberly, you and your husband will please join us in our lunch," said Bertha.

"Thank you. Of course I had no idea of getting my dinner out here. We are stopping at the hotel in Swampscott, and shall have dinner when we get back; but as I feel kinder lank, and seeing that Caleb is an old acquaintance, I don't care if I do take a little bit."

Peter supplied her with a plate, napkin, knife and fork.

"I guess I'll do just as the rest of you are doing, squat right down on the rocks," she said, taking a seat.

"Well, I never! This beats me! Strawberries and cream! Oh, my! The folks at home won't believe a word when I tell them who I met and what I had to eat."

Mr. Gabberly sat at a distance, and it was only by repeated urging that he could be induced to take any thing.

When they had finished their lunch, Caleb walked down the beach with Mr. Gabberly, and learned of affairs in Millbrook. There had been many changes. Mr. Meek was making money faster than ever. He was very unpopular, however, for he had organized the Catawampus Oil Company, and had sold the stock to his confiding townsmen who had money to invest. He had pictured a golden future for them. He did not doubt that the well when sunk to the proper depth would yield at least fifty barrels a day, and perhaps one hundred: he had a little of the stock left, which they could have at par if they subscribed at once; but he would not keep it any specified time, not even for his best friend. Mr. Nubbin had put in one thousand dollars, others had taken a like amount, and some even more. The certificates were beautifully printed and pretty to look at, but the well did not flow, nor would it if they were to sink it to China. The money that had been paid in had gone mainly into Mr. Meek's pocket, who had kept within the pale of the law, and there was no redress for the swindled stockholders. The loss of one thousand dollars so affected Mr. Nubbin that he went out to his barn, climbed up to the high beam, tied one end of a rope about it and the other around his neck, and gave a jump out of the world, leaving so much money that Deborah could live a lady the rest of her days.

Caleb could not quite rejoice that Mr. Nubbin was dead, but, under the circumstances, was reconciled to the ways of Providence.

Mrs. Gabberly now joined Caleb and her husband. She looked significantly at Caleb, and nodded her head in the direction of Bertha. Caleb not noticing her nods and winks, Mr. Gabberly nudged his elbow.

"I've been talking with her," she said. "She ain't a bit

stuck up. She is a beauty, too, if I ever saw one, and a real lady. If I was the queen of England, she couldn't be any politer than she has been. And, only think, you saved her life! I don't wonder she thinks a heap of you. She said that you was one of the noblest young men that she ever saw. I thought it wouldn't hurt ye any to know. It is a nice bed of clover that you have dropped into, Caleb, and there is no knowing what may come of it. I have been thinking all along that you and Linda would strike up a bargain some day. I know who has been getting letters from Boston; but, oh, my! only think of the heap of money that this other one has got. I sha'n't blame you a bit for getting in there if you can."

Caleb's face flushed with vexation, but he could make no reply; he could only change the subject. He asked how long they expected to stay at the beach.

"Oh, only a few days. We just came down to get revived a little. Husband has been kinder run down, the doctor said he didn't need physic, but rest and salt air and a diet of codfish and clams."

"I see that my friends are waiting for me, and I must bid you good-bye. Please give my regards to all inquiring friends," Caleb said, turning back to join Bertha, Aunt Janet and the Professor, who wished to take a drive along the beach. His brain was excited over what he had heard.

"Your acquaintance is a very amusing and talkative lady," said Bertha.

"She is an old she-dragon!" he exclaimed, with a vehemence that startled the Professor, and brought a peal of laughter from Bertha and Aunt Janet.

"Please excuse me; the epithet applied itself. She has always been looked upon as a meddlesome member of society, and I am afraid that she has marred your pleasure for the day."

"Oh, no; I enjoyed her ways and manners," Bertha replied.

They rode along the beach, enjoying the scene. The sun, which at midday had paved an avenue across the waves with silver, had now wheeled into the west, and was flooding them with molten gold.

"How beautiful!" Bertha exclaimed, with the brightness and glory reflected from her face.

A cloud passed over the sun, and the glory was gone.

"It is but the same old story — disappointment in everything," she said, as they rode on.

They reached home, and were seated in the parlor. Though weary, Caleb felt that he had taken on new strength; that the brain which before had faltered at the least attempt at mental effort, was beginning to be itself again.

"Mr. Krinkle," said Bertha, sitting down by him upon the sofa, "I can not tell you how happy I have been to-day, but I want to beg pardon for the petulant remark that I made when that cloud came between us and the sun. I was disappointed at the moment, but the day has been one of the happiest of my life, and I owe it all to you."

"Nor can I ever express my thanks for the pleasure you have given me this day, I already feel stronger, and I shall be myself again in a short time. I wish I could do something in return."

"There, there! don't, please; the obligation is all the other way," she said, bidding him good-night.

In her dreams she heard the waves; they were bowing before her on the beach, coming like pilgrims to a holy shrine, offering their prayers, and this was the burden of their supplication: "Into Eden help the helpless."

CHAPTER XXXII.

WHAT HOPE AND FEAR SAID TO LINDA.

THE roses had dropped their petals to the ground. August was passing away. The swallows that had twittered on the roof and reared their little ones under the eaves by Linda's window, were taking short flights, whole families together, out over the village, wheeling around the steeple of the meeting-house, to show their mistress that the little ones would soon be able to fly away to their winter home beneath the southern skies. Sitting by her window, Linda could look down into the valley and see where the mowers had passed over the meadows, cutting the rank grass, leaving the fields brown and bare, and now the farmers were reaping their grain and binding it in sheaves. As she saw the golden patches disappear that had given brightness to the landscape, she said to herself, "So my hopes of life are being cut down, and the gladness is fading away."

Linda was troubled in spirit, not altogether by what Moses had written and said, but by Caleb's silence. Why did he not write to her? Why no answer to her letters? Was there to be an eclipse of her faith? Oh, if the eclipse should come, how dark life would be! But it would not come, — never, never, never! It could not. Caleb would be true to her. The flowers might not blossom, the trees

might not put forth their leaves, the sun might go behind a cloud and never shine again, the stars fade away and disappear from the heavens, but his love would never change. So she quieted her forebodings. Such turtle doves as she had been feeding, however, when once frightened, can never settle down and be wholly at rest, but are ever ready to spread their wings for flight.

Weeks passed, and still there was no letter from Caleb. He was well enough to write: why did he not? Could it be that he was going away from her?

While Linda was thus lost in meditation, Mrs. Gabberly called.

"How do you do, Linda? I thought that I would just drop in and let you know that we are at home again."

"I hope you had a pleasant time at the seaside," said Linda.

"Just the splendidest time that ever was."

"Did you go to Hampton beach?"

"Oh, no: to Swampscott. We spent a whole week there, and went in to bathe every day. Oh, my! isn't it nice to have the waves come kerswashing over you, almost taking your breath away!"

"Did you meet any old acquaintances?"

"Didn't we! One day we took a long walk, husband and I, all along the shore, clear over to Nahant, and who do you suppose we saw there?"

"I cannot imagine."

"I don't believe you could guess if you you were to try all day."

"Then I will not try."

"I never was so struck in a heap in all my born days. Would you believe it, we stumbled upon Caleb Krinkle!"

"Caleb!"

"Yes, and that rich girl, Miss Wayland, and her aunt, and Professor somebody or other, with a nigger to wait on 'em. They had such a dinner! oh, my! spread out on the rocks. But I must say that Miss Wayland is polite, if she is rich, and as well behaved as if she was poor. She asked me and husband to take hold and help ourselves. They had chicken, tongue, ham, boiled eggs, and all sorts of fixin's, — strawberries and hot coffee. Oh, my! it was the best coffee I ever tasted, if the nigger did make it."

"How did Caleb seem to be?"

"He seemed to be able to eat just as well as the rest of us, but said that his head wasn't right, and that he couldn't do any work."

"Did he ask any thing about what was going on up here?"

"Oh, yes, he and husband had a long talk."

"Did he say any thing about coming up this summer?"

"No. He said he must get back to work as soon as he could. I had a real nice talk with the girl. She thinks there ain't nobody in the world like Caleb. She said that he was the noblest young man that ever was. I told Caleb he was in luck, and I guess he is. She is as handsome as a picter, and has got such a heap of money! Oh, my! a million, Moses says. I used to think, Linda, that you and Caleb would hitch horses sometime or other, but I reckon that he can get rich all of a sudden if he wants to. But never mind; there is just as good fish in the sea as ever were caught."

Mrs. Gabberly had only run in to stop a moment. She was calling upon her neighbors to let them know she was at home again, and took her departure.

Tears upon Linda's cheeks; her heart in wild commo-

tion. More bare and brown now the stubble fields; the swallows all gone, and the turtle-doves fluttering in the air.

Weary the day, lonely the night. Could it be that Caleb, after all, had proved untrue? Had he been captivated by a beautiful face, a loving heart, and glittering gold? Through the long and weary night Hope and Fear discussed the question.

Fear. "Miss Wayland is rich, and who is there among men that does not care for money? Men scheme and labor to obtain wealth; sit up nights, burning life's candle at both ends; make themselves old in the prime of life; stake all on a single speculation, — on the cast of the dice; barter honor, virtue, and every thing worth living for, to secure it. They gamble, fight and die for it."

Hope. "Caleb would not do it. Has he not had something nobler in view? Has he not denied himself of every comfort that he might obtain an education? Has he not cast every thing else behind his back in order to secure it?"

Fear. "But now riches are before him: by reaching out his hand he can take them, and so secure all that he has longed for beside. For him no more sleepless nights and weary plodding through the days. Is Caleb so different from other men that he will not take the gift? Is he so unselfish that he will turn his back upon wealth and come to a poor girl who has only herself to give him?"

Hope. "But he is noble-hearted. It cannot be that he is actuated by mercenary motives. It would not be like him."

Fear. "Bertha is very beautiful. Men worship beauty. They press the rose to their lips, inhale its fragrance, wear it near the heart, but who among them sees any beauty in a plain wayside flower? They pluck the one and pass the other by."

Hope. "Did not Caleb see in the wayside flower something that charmed him, before the days of adversity came to him? He could have chosen Daisy or Bell, or a dozen others, but he passed them by and came to the blacksmith's humble home, to find the one he loved. Perhaps he loves her still."

Oh, the inspiring thought! If she could be sure of it — if she could but know beyond all doubt that it was so, she could wait forever! Terrible the suspense. Then Fear took up the question again.

Fear. "Miss Wayland is a star in society. Learned men sit at her table, while Dan and his mother and Winifred sit at mine. Winifred! Perhaps Caleb thinks that if he were to marry you she would be a hindrance to him."

What answer will you make to this, O Hope, so sweet and fair and full of charity? Hope had nothing to say, and Fear went on.

Fear. "Caleb saved her life, and in her gratitude she kneels at his feet, and gives herself and all that she has to him."

Hope. "But did not Linda do what she could to bring him up from the bottom of the pond?"

Fear. "That was so long ago he has forgotten it."

Hope. "A true heart does not so soon forget. One has not forgotten it. I am sure that Bertha's love can never be truer than Linda's has been."

Fear. "One letter only has Caleb written."

Hope. "Perhaps his letters have miscarried; or perhaps he has not been able to write."

Fear. "That is not probable. And what will you say to Moses' story?"

Hope. "Maybe Moses is prejudiced. He never liked Caleb."

Fear. "Mrs. Gabberly has seen Caleb and Bertha at the beach. What will you say to her testimony?"

Hope. "I did not think that Caleb could be false. God forgive him!"

Thus so deep was Linda's love, that even though Caleb might be going away from her, she could ask God to bless him.

The late-rising moon looked in upon her, as we in pity sometimes gaze upon friends in distress, though powerless to help them. The night winds moaned in sympathy, as if to comfort her in her sorrow. She saw a bright star that had been beaming through the night, growing dim as it sunk into the haze of the horizon, and in like manner the star that had led her on was going down, and it would rise no more. O deceived and wounded heart, God help thee!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MR. MEEK'S LITTLE GAME.

MR. MEEK was in the prime of life, and very well preserved. Other men, not older than himself, were turning gray, but the gray hairs did not show themselves in his whiskers. If by chance any made their appearance while he was asleep, they were plucked up by the roots with a pair of tweezers every morning, as he stood before the looking-glass. Mr. Meek did not intend to let Time get ahead of him. He would keep the Old Fellow at bay. But he was a disappointed man. Things were not going as he had planned them. He had accumulated a fortune, and money was pouring in upon him so fast that he was at a loss what to do with it. It was not the whole of his plan, however, to get rich; he had mapped out a future for Moses. He had expected great things from his son; had hoped to see him making masterly pleas before the courts; elected to the legislature; a candidate for Congress; and performing a grand part in life that would reflect honor upon himself. But Moses had not accomplished any thing; he knew how to spend money, and that was all.

Mr. Meek's home was not attractive, for although his housekeeper, Mrs. Tansey, looked after his domestic affairs,

an old lady of sixty, fat and wrinkled, jarring the house with her slow and heavy step, and who dropped asleep in her chair, was not entertaining company. Mr. Meek could not resist the conviction that Time was cheating him out of the pleasures that rightly belonged to him. The thought was not a pleasant one. He had not enjoyed much happiness in life, and had come to the conclusion that if he was going to get what was due him, to collect his debts, as it were, of the Old Fellow who was going about with a scythe and an hour-glass, it was time for him to be about it.

The flowering of the almond tree, to use an oriental figure, is supposed to be indicative of wisdom, the period in life when the judgment controls the actions; but Mr. Meek resolved that the almond tree should not flourish so far as he was concerned. He would pull out every whitening hair in his whiskers, and color those that made their appearance in his head; he would be a young man and marry a young wife.

He had been a close observer of every thing and everybody in Millbrook, and had come to the conclusion that there was one lady in the town worthy to be any man's wife. She had already shown her ability to make her way in the world. She was not rich, and hers was a small and unpretending home, but she had made it a palace of beauty. He had watched her from day to day as she came into the post office or the store to trade, and he was charmed by her ease and grace and womanhood. Of all the ladies of his acquaintance, there was not one to be compared to Linda Fair.

She was twenty-three, while he was only forty-five years of age. He could offer her a splendid home and abundant wealth. She would have every want gratified. Little Golden Locks would be their child. It was an enchanting picture.

Linda was sitting at her sewing-machine, but how wearily it went! The something that had kept it humming so merrily from morn till night had dropped out of her life. The nights were more wearisome than the days. Though her hopes were dead and buried, their ghosts were abroad; they came into her chamber and peered at her in the darkness.

"I will build a solid wall between the present and the past," she said, with a firm resolution, but before she was aware there were tears upon her pillow. The water soaked through the masonry and undermined the structure. Though Caleb had deserted her there was one comfort left — Winifred. And now she could understand why it was that the dear child came floating down the river on that terrible morning; why she came to her arms. She said to herself, — "God saw that the time would come when I should need her. He looked ahead and planned the pattern of my life, and laid the warp and woof of it. For Winifred I will live and labor."

She was thinking thus, when Mr. Meek made his appearance in the half-opened door.

"Good-evening, Miss Linda. It's a very charming evening," he said, bowing.

"It is very pleasant," Linda replied, rising to give him a seat.

"It was so charming that I could not resist the temptation to take a walk, and drop in and see your pleasant home. Really, you make it a palace by your genius and art," said Mr. Meek, looking round upon the flowers.

"I believe in having a pleasant home."

"It is the pleasantest in town, and then you have Winifred to fill it with sunlight. I do not see her around."

"She has gone to play with the neighbors' children."

"The child has captivated me completely," said Mr. Meek.

"She has very winning ways," Linda replied.

"Mrs. Dishaway is well, I hope?"

"I presume so, but she is not at home."

Mr. Meek did not express any regret over the intelligence; he was pleased to hear it, rather.

"I have dropped in to have a little talk with you about Winifred. I want to consult with you about her future," he said.

"I will hear what you have to say," was the reply

Mr. Meek was an observant man, and was accustomed to weigh words. He noticed that Linda did not say, "It will give me pleasure to hear you." There was a quiet reserve and decision in her words, and in her manner of speaking, that set him to thinking it would be well to approach the subject circumspectly.

"You may have observed, Miss Linda, that I have always taken considerable interest in the child, and I will say to you what I never have said to any one else. If my home had been different from what it was, I should have adopted her at the outset; but you, and all the world now know — though perhaps you did not know it then — that my home was no place for her. It was better that she should fall into your hands. Even if her own mother had lived, perhaps she could not have done any better by her than you have done."

"I have tried to train her up rightly."

"And you could not have done better. Your training has been perfect, Miss Linda. But what I want to say is, that I have a strong desire to see her have every possible means of obtaining an education."

"I hope to be able to give her all needful advantages."

"Yes, yes, of course. Everybody knows that you are ready to work your fingers off for Winifred, but I would gladly save you from such toil. I would like to assist you; in fact, I am perfectly willing to give her an education — the very best that can be had."

"You are very kind, Mr. Meek, but Winifred has so endeared herself to me, that I could not think of permitting any one else to educate her. It is a great pleasure to work for those we love."

"Most certainly; never was there a truer word spoken, and for that very reason I want to be a participant in your pleasure. We, together, will educate the child; we will be unitedly interested in her welfare. I have such a strong personal interest in her, I really feel that I cannot be denied the privilege."

"The words "personal interest," which he had used on another occasion, the same that had been used by the writer of the anonymous letters, set Linda again to thinking.

"What may be your desires or intentions, Mr. Meek?" Linda asked, determined to know exactly what he was driving at.

"I will be frank with you. I have already made you my confident, by alluding to the unhappy state of affairs in my family, but I am happy to say that they no longer exist, and now nothing would so gladden my heart as to hear Winifred call me father. In brief, and to be explicit, I should like to adopt her."

"Oh, I could not think of giving her up, Mr. Meek; I could not make such a sacrifice. She has so entwined herself around me, — so taken hold of my being, that I could lay down my life for her. I thank you for your kindness, but I could not think of complying with your request."

Mr. Meek heard the words, and weighed them before replying.

"All honor to you, my dear Miss Linda. Such sentiments can come only from a true heart. You are so kind, so frank, so good, that I am encouraged to say what I have had in mind during the past months."

He had been sitting on the opposite side of the room, but moved his chair nearer — almost to her side.

"You know, my dear Miss Fair, that I was very unfortunate in my marriage relations, and that I have not had much happiness in life. I am lonely. There is no one to care for me; but if I could only have that dear child in my house; if I could but hear, through the days, the music of her voice; if I could but see the one who has been a mother to her, there also, — if I could but call you both mine, — if I could but hear Winifred call you mother and myself father, I should be supremely happy. I have come, my dear Miss Fair, to offer you such a home."

He spoke with a low, faltering voice, and reached out his hand as if to take her own, but Linda folded her arms and looked him in the face. If there was a slight fluttering of her heart, it was not from fear, but surprise. She was about to reply, but he went on:

"I see that this declaration is very unexpected to you, but please take time before making a reply, and think it over."

"I am, as you have said, Mr. Meek, very much surprised at this declaration on your part, but there is no need that I should take time to consider it; I never should have but one reply. I never could give you an affirmative answer."

"Perhaps, if you were to consider the advantages and benefits that would come, not only to yourself, but to Winifred, — a good home, abundant means, educational privileges, position in society, to say nothing of what money will do, and of the comforts it will bring, — if you were to see the question in all its aspects, you might come to a different conclusion."

"I know, Mr. Meek, that you have a fine mansion for a home, and that you have abundant means; I do not despise money, nor do I wish to appear insensible to the ad-

vantages you hold out for the future of Winifred, but I am just as able to make a final decision now as I ever shall be."

"Please allow me to ask you to reserve your decision for a few days."

"No, Mr. Meek, I do not wish ever to think of it again. The question is settled forever, so far as I am concerned."

Mr. Meek bit his lip. He did not bow quite so deferentially as when he entered the apartment. He sat in silence a moment, as if reflecting, but evidently concluded that he might as well say what he had in mind then, as well as at another time.

"Miss Fair, my affections have so gone out toward Winifred that I must have her near me. My own happiness is involved, and though there is a disparity of years between us, I can be a kind husband to you. I can love you with all the strength of my manhood. I must have both of you near me. I have Winifred's well-being very much at heart, and will do every thing possible for your happiness as well as for hers."

"I do not doubt your honorable intentions, Mr. Meek; but I cannot change my decision."

Mr. Meek was at a loss what to say. He was chagrined, for he had not expected such a rebuff. His vanity was wounded, but he could not think of giving up the suit he had begun. He must win the girl who, by the very refusal of his offer, had inflamed him all the more. There was still an argument which he had not advanced. He did not wish to bring it forward if he could avoid it, for while it would be potent, it would not be quite agreeable. Should he make it? He hesitated, for behind it was a shadow, — a ghost that had been walking the earth, — seen only by himself thus far, and possibly by the wife

from whom he had been divorced. His neighbors most familiar with his affairs never mistrusted that a spectre was ever shadowing his footsteps, and if they should happen to discover it, what a hurly-burly there would be in Millbrook!

After sitting in silence a moment, Mr. Meek took counsel of his hopes, concluding that the spectre would not reveal itself.

"Perhaps, Miss Fair, you may never have thought of the fact that you have no legal claim to Winifred."

"Who has, if I haven't?" Linda asked.

"The child's status under the law never has been passed upon. At present she is nobody's child. You perhaps know that I am president of the savings bank, and of course am aware that there is a sum of money on deposit in trust for Winifred. The child has no guardian, and it may be necessary to have one appointed, especially as it is my purpose to add a considerable sum to the amount already in the bank."

He stopped a moment, for they were searching eyes that looked him steadily in the face. But having begun, Mr. Meek concluded to go on.

"I have no doubt, Miss Fair, that if I apply to the court to be appointed guardian to Winifred, the judge will grant my request. Yet please do not think for a moment that I want to take her away from you. On the contrary, I want you still to be as a mother to her. Pardon my frankness."

What a revelation was this! A faintness came over Linda for a moment. Her keen perception and vigorous intellect comprehended the situation.

"Be my wife or give up Winifred," was expressed in the smile upon his face. She could also read it in his

manner. He could play with her as the cat plays with a mouse before devouring it. He was diabolical in his politeness.

By a heaven-born instinct that had always made him repulsive to her, and a perception sharper and truer than reason, she read him on the instant, saw his motives, aims and ends. As the lightning's flash at the midnight hour reveals all the landscape, so she saw his plan.

Natures refined and purified as was hers, intuitions as true, and intellects as keen, are never wanting in resolution. The law would be his ally, the court would aid him to carry out his plan, and yet, seeing all this, the nobility of her nature asserted itself in all its majesty. Not for an instant did she falter. She rose and stood before him, a queen in her dignity and righteous indignation.

"Mr. Meek, I have heard what you have said, and understand it. You ask me to marry you, you threaten to take away Winifred if I will not, and you will invoke the law to compel me to do one or the other. I have only to say that I will not be your wife and I shall do what I can to prevent you from taking Winifred from me."

If an earthquake had rumbled beneath his feet Mr. Meek could not have been more astonished than he was at that moment. He had not counted upon such a reply; it had not been an element, not even a possible contingency, in his calculations. He had laid a fortune at the feet of a poor girl and she had spurned it. He had calculated that she would hesitate, would say that she did not care about getting married, but at last would gracefully yield. Or, if she could not make up her mind to accept him, she would perhaps shed a few tears over the prospect of losing Winifred. He had seen women weep and men bluster, but never before had he come in contact with a

girl who was so nearly allied to the angels that she could confront him as the archangel confronted Satan.

Linda stood before him majestic in her indignation, with a glory on her face such as sometimes shines upon the human countenance when a soul is moved by an impulse wholly divine.

"You have my answer, sir," she said.

Mr. Meek arose, with shame and confusion in every feature. Though confounded, he was not forgetful of his power to compel her to be his wife or give up Winifred.

"I will be frank with you, Miss Linda," he said, polite as ever. "I will not urge you to a union that would not be congenial to you, but I trust you will not think it strange if I take measures to become Winifred's guardian, and you know me well enough to understand that I usually accomplish what I undertake. Do not think that I say it to force you to comply with my wishes. Oh, no; far be it from me to do that: but I am merely stating what my intentions are, so that you may have time to think of it. I cannot but hope that in your cool and sober moments your love for Winifred and your mature judgment will induce you to reverse your decision. I will see you again, after you have had time to think of it, and before taking any action in the matter."

He bowed and smiled; turned and bowed again as he passed over the threshold. He smiled as he went down the street, as he sat in his counting-room, as he lay awake at midnight thinking it over and saying to himself, "I've got her."

CHAPTER XXXIV

MR. BLOSSOM FINDS FAULT WITH MOSES' WATCH-CHAIN.

MOSES was enjoying his vacation. Not having anything to call him up in the morning, he laid abed, much to the discomfort of Mrs. Tansey, who could not bear to have the breakfast-table standing all the forenoon. After a late breakfast he smoked a cigar and took a stroll down the street, stopping now and then to chat with the young ladies in the front yards, or to play a game of croquet. A good many young ladies from Boston and New York had come to Millbrook to obtain a breath of fresh air and to enjoy themselves beneath the elms during the dog-days. Moses could chat with them till the stage came whirling up the street, when he must be at the post office, not only to get his own letters, but to change the mail; for, having nothing else to occupy his time, he had consented to do thus much for his old friend, Mr. Sharp, who was taking his vacation at the seashore.

As the days waned, the visitors packed their trunks and took their departure, but Moses still remained and patronized the "Flying Eagle's" livery every fair day, taking Miss Bell Blossom out to ride. Or, if by any chance Miss Bell could not go, he leaned over the front yard gate and chatted with her, or they strolled together beneath the elms, not altogether to the liking of Bell's father.

Mr. Blossom had his own notion of things. So independent was he in that respect that people were accustomed to say that he did his own thinking. He had noticed a growing intimacy between Bell and Moses, and there had been so much riding and strolling and leaning over the gate, that Mr. Blossom concluded he would have a few words with Bell upon the subject.

"I don't know, Bell," he said, one evening when Moses had taken his departure, — "I don't know what may be going on between you and Moses, but the time has come for you to turn over a new leaf. You have had enough of gadding, riding, flirting and strolling, and I want you to put a stop to it."

"Why must I put a stop to it, father?"

"Because I don't like him."

"But suppose I do?" Bell asked, nestling down into his lap and pulling his whiskers, as she was accustomed to do when she wanted to bring him round to her way of thinking or reconcile him to any scheme.

"I should be very sorry if I thought you had any particular liking for him, my daughter."

The smile faded from Bell's face, for she saw that he had taken the matter to heart.

"What is there about Moses that you do not like?"

"He munches burnt coffee and cloves."

"Munches burnt coffee and cloves!" Bell exclaimed, at a loss to comprehend him.

"Yes, my dear; that is one reason why I don't like him."

"Folks say that you are queer in your ideas, father, and I partly believe it. What is there objectional about coffee and cloves? Don't we drink the one and put the other into pies and cakes? It is only a habit with Moses."

"No, it isn't a habit. We do some things from habit

and we do other things with a purpose. Moses isn't the only man I have met who munches coffee and cloves and snakeroot and other things for a purpose. What does he do it for? Isn't it to cover up with something sweet and fragrant something that is not so sweet? It isn't the coffee that I object to, but the whiskey."

A new light dawned upon Bell. She had seen Moses eat cloves, but it never had occurred to her that it might be for a purpose. She loved Moses. From childhood her heart had gone out toward him, and so long as he was only doing as a great many other young men were in the habit of doing, she could not forego her love. He had not formally proposed to her, but why did he linger by her side, why take her hand so tenderly, why encircle her with his arm, if he did not love her?

"He only takes a glass now and then, as all young men do," she replied.

"No, it is not an occasional, but the habitual smell of whiskey that he is trying to cover up. Now, my daughter, I have your happiness very much at heart, and I would rather follow you to the grave than see you married to a drunkard, or to a man who is in danger of being one. To my way of thinking, there isn't this side of the bottomless pit a life so full of misery as the life of the woman who has a habitual sot for a husband. You can't take up a newspaper without seeing an account of a murder, or an attempt to kill, — a maiming or a wounding by drunken husbands. And only think of the crimes that don't get into the papers! Every night myriads of women lie down beside drunken wretches whose very presence taints the air, and they rise in the morning to a life of misery, hunger, wretchedness and woe, that has no ending except in the grave."

"I am sorry that you are so prejudiced against Moses, father. Don't you think that he has any good qualities?"

"A great many, I dare say; but many a noble ship has foundered at sea because there was a worm-eaten plank in the hull. When we cross the ocean we are careful to select the staunchest steamer possible, but there is many a girl who starts for a voyage across life's ocean with a craft which she knows, or ought to know, is in danger of going to the bottom. I want you to go safely, my daughter."

"What else have you to say about Moses?"

"I don't like the cut of his clothes, nor the way he wears his beard; nor do I like the rings on his fingers."

"Why, father! I think that his clothes fit elegantly; there isn't a wrinkle in his coat, and it is of the latest style."

"You remember, my dear, — it was before you were born, though, but you have heard me tell of it, — that I spent a great many years in the South and West, travelling up and down the Mississippi river on steamboats. I travelled so constantly, that in the course of years I was able to read character almost at sight. Whenever I saw a man with elegant clothes that fitted him almost to perfection, who was very polite to everybody, who never got into a row, who wore a diamond ring on his little finger and a diamond pin in his shirt, who was very precise about his beard and moustache, who had a cold eye and a certain indescribable hardness about the face, wherever I saw such a man I knew in an instant what he was travelling for, how he spent his time and what he did for his living. I knew what his hopes and aspirations were. I understood his character almost as well as if I had known him for years."

"What did he do for a living, and what was his character?" Bell asked, thinking quite as much of her father's habits of observation and his way of looking at things as any application the description might have to Moses.

"He fleeced fools; he was a gambler."

"O father, you don't mean to insinuate that Moses is a gambler! You are really too hard on him; you are prejudiced against him. Of course he plays cards, as almost everybody does, whist, euchre, and innocent games, — but he never gambled for money. Oh, no, he wouldn't do that, I know he wouldn't."

"How do you know?"

"I am sure that he wouldn't; gambling is so low and mean and degrading. He couldn't do it; he would lose the respect of everybody."

"It gives me pleasure to see you conscious of what is right and noble and good, but if you will analyze what you have just said you will see that it contains denial and inference, but nothing else. Now I do not assert that Moses is a confirmed gambler. He has not had sufficient time since he left home for the hardness, characteristic of the confirmed gamester, to show itself in his face; the humanities are not yet wholly seared as with a hot iron, but if the searing process has not begun, then for once, after forty years of observation, I am mistaken."

"Moses is too much of a gentleman to do it."

"Well, time will tell. I shall be very happy to find myself mistaken."

"Have you any other objection to Moses?"

"Yes; I don't like his watch-chain."

"What has a watch-chain to do with a man's character, I should like to know?"

"A good deal; more than you think, perhaps. My daughter, I am getting well along in years, and I have kept my eyes pretty wide open ever since I was a boy and this is the result of my observation: When I see a man wearing a flashy watch-chain, I am pretty sure there is a screw loose or

a wheel wanting about the fellow somewhere. I don't say it is always a sure sign, but I never yet have been mistaken in regard to it. A man who carries a jeweller's shop on his fingers or hitched to his watch-chain may not be wicked, but it is a pretty sure indication that he is weak. It isn't, however, Moses' chain so much as the toggery attached to it that I object to. You have noticed a seal, a locket, a little telescope, a dog's head, and I don't know what else, dangling in a bunch against his vest. I took a look at them the other day, and improved the opportunity of peeping into the miniature telescope."

Mr. Blossom stopped. Should he tell Bell what he saw?

"You saw Moses' photograph of course," said Bell.

"Yes, but of his character, not of his face. I could see the books he liked best, — novels written by French authors, and I dare say you might find a pile of them on his table, or in his trunk. I could see the pictures that give him the most pleasure, — not such as you would like to see hanging in your chamber, but which I dare say are hanging in his. I could see the women whose society give him the most pleasure, — not such ladies as you love to associate with, — they were all there plain to my eyes. Now, my dear, I have talked very plainly, and you know my sentiments, and I would like, for your own happiness as well as for the happiness of myself and your mother, to have you cut loose from Moses."

"I hope you will not blame me, father, if I do not see things as you do."

"I do not expect you to, my daughter, but I don't want you to get entangled with Moses."

"He has always treated me kindly and honorably."

"I dare say, but I want you to keep clear of him."

"I can't be rude to him without some excuse."

"I would not have you rude, but you must let him know that his attentions are not agreeable."

"But they *are* agreeable, and I think that you don't understand him."

The conversation ended, with a frown on Mr. Blossom's brow and a feeling on the part of Bell that he was unreasonable in his prejudices against Moses.

CHAPTER XXXV.

LITTLE MAID'S HEAD IS LEVEL.

AS the rock must be broken by the hammer before we can get at the golden ore, so there are some souls that must be smitten by adversity before we can get at their true worth. Some spirits are bravest when the storm is loudest. Linda's was of such a nature. There was no trembling of her lips, no blanching of the cheek, but an unusual brightness came into her eyes, and there was a quickening of the pulse, as she sat down to think, — not whether she should accept Mr. Meek's offer and become his wife — *that* was settled, but how to circumvent him in his designs as to Winifred.

She sat in her rocking-chair, looking out as if upon the landscape, the russet fields, the distant woodlands, with the first symptoms of approaching change of colors, visible in the foliage of the elms and maples. But she did not see either the fields, the woodland, nor the changing foliage. She was looking into vacancy. She was picturing a battle in which she was alone, and yet appointed of God to be the guardian and protector of Winifred, against the machinations of a wicked but powerful antagonist.

That Mr. Meek would do all he had threatened or hinted, and more, she could not doubt. She knew that he usually accomplished whatever he laid his hands to. He

meant just what he said when he informed her that he could obtain the appointment as guardian for Winifred. She knew that he was strong and that she was weak, and yet she did not quail. How could she best defeat his plans? What tactics ought she to pursue? Would it be best to go to Mr. Makepeace, the lawyer, and put the case into his hands at once; or, to the judge of the court, and plead her case?

She turned over the first proposition and rejected it.

Mr. Makepeace was her friend; he was a good honest lawyer, but in his integrity and slowness he would be no match for Meek's plausibility and quickness. She took up the other proposition: The judge would hear her story. He might pity her; but she was only a poor girl, and knew nothing of business. Mr. Meek was honored, respected, a trustee of estates, and known to the court: herself, unknown. She would not stand the ghost of a chance against Mr. Meek. Thinking — thinking — thinking, her eyes seeing nothing but the problem.

Winifred came in with flowers in her hands, but Linda did not see her — did not hear her steps upon the carpet.

"What are you thinking of, aunty?"

"How to solve a problem in the Rule of Three, darling."

"I didn't know you were studying arithmetic."

"Oh, yes, I am. Don't you know that I have to help you quite often with your problems in fractions?"

"But what are you studying it for?"

"To keep my hand in. Besides, Mr. Meek has just given me a problem to solve, and he thinks I can't do it. Aunty don't like to give in until she is beaten," said Linda with a smile, kissing the fair cheek, and getting a hug in return.

"And now, darling, just hand me the almanac."

Winifred brought it to her, wondering what she could find in it to help her.

"The court meets the second Tuesday in September, and this is the first," said Linda, unconsciously, aloud.

"What has that got to do with it?" Winifred asked.

"Considerable. It is a question of time; it is a whole week, to begin with."

"I don't see," said Winifred, more in the dark than before.

"Of course not, darling, but you will see it all and understand it all when you get to it, but run away and play now, and let aunty think."

The child went away, and the thinking went on.

"Dan will be at home to-morrow, and he will help me. I can rely on him."

Those were the accepted thoughts, the thoughts through which she stuck a pin, as it were, and reserved them for future use. And then the sewing-machine went on with its humming, stitching her thoughts into the vests she was making for Mr. Meek.

"I will finish them, close the account, and draw my pay," and the machine went on with a swifter humming.

Dan came. His quick eye saw that something had occurred during his absence, but he was too wise to ask any questions.

"She will tell me if it is any thing she wants me to know, and if she don't want me to know, it's none of my business," he said to himself.

Dan sat down to his supper, talked with Winifred, took her into his lap afterwards, and told her of his last journey, till it was time for her to go to bed. Mrs. Dishaway was absent.

"Dan," said Linda, laying her soft hand upon his brow and brushing the hair from his temples as she was wont to do.

"What is it, Little Maid?"

"You are my best friend. I can trust you."

"Thank you, Little Maid. I wish I was more worthy of your trust."

"I want to tell you all about what has happened, and then what I am going to do. I am not going to make you promise to keep it secret, because I know you will. Some secrets are more securely kept when no promise is given than when exacted; mutual trust is the best of all pledges."

"I think that you may set your heart at rest on that point, Little Maid. I can keep my own secrets, and hope I shall not abuse your confidence."

"I know you will not, Dan," and she narrated what had passed.

"The wicked, hypocritical, contemptible old scapegrace of a sinner!" exclaimed Dan, unable to restrain his indignation, and letting off epithets like a battery of fireworks.

"So he is going to compel you to marry him, or else give up Golden Locks, is he? Blast his picter!"

"It looks like that."

"You are not going to let him slip the matrimonial noose round your neck, are ye?"

"O Dan, how can you ask such a question! You don't suppose I would entertain such a thought for a moment, do you?"

"No, I don't; but I reckon there are some girls who would jump at the chance, as a pickerel darts at a shiner, —only to get hooked. Women are curious critters; some of 'em, I mean."

He was thinking of Deborah, how she had married Mr. Nubbin, because she did not know what she was about, and had been wretched through all the years, till Nubbin hanged himself.

"Well, then, if you ain't going to jine your fortune with

his, he intends to take Golden Locks, and there's where we must head him off. And how shall we do it?" he added.

"That is just what I want to talk about. What do you say?"

"Whatever we do, there mustn't be any fizzling out or flashing in the pan. You hold on a minute, and let me see if I can cipher it out."

To cipher it out Dan put his feet in a chair, half closed his eyes, and twirled his thumbs for several minutes.

"Little Maid, I'm up a stump. I can't see daylight anywhere. I am afraid Meek will hoe his row in spite of us. Ye see everybody knows he has got money, and knows how to take care of it. The court knows him. He is guardian for the Leatherses children; he's settled ever so many estates; he's director of the bank; he's got the inside track. We might petition and protest till all is blue, and we shouldn't make any headway against him. He would hocus-pocus us every time. If we should get up a petition for the appointment of anybody else, he would snap his fingers in our faces. There ain't a smarter villain anywhere round than he is."

"I don't intend to let Mr. Meek take Winifred away from me," said Linda quietly and firmly.

"But if he gets the twist over us with the law, he'll do it."

"No, I don't think he will even then."

"But he can. The law is powerful; it can do any thing it pleases," said Dan, making an effort to convince her of the majesty of the law, remembering that she was a woman.

"No, Dan, not even if it pleases."

"Why, Little Maid! you can't stand against the sheriff! You can't nail up your windows, and lock your doors, and

get kettles of hot water ready to scald him, and all that?"

"No, I sha'n't do any thing of the kind."

"Well, what will you do, when he comes with his mandamus, or woman-damus, which I suppose he will have in this case?"

"Supposing he shouldn't find me?"

"Then he would take Golden Locks by the hand and lead her off."

"No, he wouldn't."

"It is very easy for us to put our foot down, Little Maid, and say that a thing sha'n't be, just because we feel it ought not to be; but the question is, how to prevent it; don't you see?"

"Yes, Dan, I see, and let me tell you that Mr. Meek won't have her, nor will the sheriff have her, — not if he has all the sheriffs in the State of New Hampshire to back him up, and all the judges besides."

A shadow passed over Dan's face. Had the desertion of White Hair and this new trouble taken away her senses?

"Have you lost your wits, Little Maid?"

"No, Dan, I never was clearer headed in my life. Mr. Meek won't get her."

"Why not?"

"Because he won't find her."

"But he'll get out a search warrant."

"Even with that he will not find her."

"But they'll summon you, and you'll have to tell where she is."

"I sha'n't tell."

"Then they'll put you into jail, till you do."

"But I won't go to jail."

It was spoken so triumphantly that Dan was afraid,

after all, she was losing her senses, and his great noble heart went out in pity for her. He resolved, if it was so, that she should never want for any thing while he had strength to help her. He would make one more effort to reason with her.

"But, Little Maid, they take folks by main force and put irons on 'em when they won't go to jail peaceably. I shouldn't want to see you in manacles ; I couldn't stand it."

"Oh. they won't do that, Dan ; they won't be able to lay a finger on me."

"But they will ; you don't know so much about the law, Little Maid, as I do. Excuse me for saying it."

"No, Dan, they won't so much as lay their little finger upon me."

"Why not ? "

"Now you have asked a sensible question, Dan ; because I sha'n't be here, nor will Winifred be here."

"Won't — be — here ! " Dan repeated the words slowly, as if weighing every one. And slowly the comprehension came to him.

"O Little Maid ! No brain but yours would ever have thought it out. Here I've been wondering if you were not daft, and you have been laughing at me all the time. Won't be able to find you ! won't be able to find Golden Locks ! Oh, that will be jolly ! Won't it be cute ? The sheriff hunting for you everywhere, and not able to find you ! " Dan laughed till his sides ached, and felt like taking down his violin and dancing a jig. "Little Maid, your head is level. Jingo ! Won't Meek tear his hair ? Oh, won't he suck in his lips and walk like a hyena around his den when he finds he has been thwarted by a girl ! " A shade passed over Dan's face. "But it will be so lonely here ! I can't bear to think of it. No sight of your sweet face.

Little Maid, I am a better man when I am here with you than when I am away. You are more than a sister to me, you are an angel. God bless you for all the good you have done me. And then the house will be so empty with Golden Locks gone. She is so sweet and winning that when I am away it seems as if I must leave all the old rags and pelts behind and hasten home to see her. But where will you go?"

"Wherever the Lord shall direct me. I put my trust in Him. He sent Winifred to my arms for some good purpose, I believe, and he will not overturn his own work. He can't do that, and whatever he brings to me, wherever he may lead me, I know that it will be just the very best thing that can happen. I know that it is my duty to flee. but do not know where I am going. I shall go till I am beyond the reach of Mr. Meek, — beyond the reach of any law he may be able to invoke. I must go secretly. He must know nothing till I am gone, nor must anybody else. And now, Dan, I have only you to help me carry out my plans."

Linda unfolded her plan. Her keen, searching eye and quickened intellect had gone straight to the mark. She had a few hundred dollars in the bank, and so had Dan. He might advance her money and take her bank-book, and she could be in funds without creating any suspicions on the part of Mr. Meek. If she were to withdraw her own money, and the fact should by any means come to his knowledge, he might mistrust that there was something going on, and set a watch upon her movements. Dan must carry her and Winifred away by night to the cars where they could take the westward-bound express train. It would be dark; no one would see them, and their tracks would be completely covered. That was her plan, — one that would defeat all the machinations of Mr. Meek.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MR. MEEK TWISTS HIS WHISKERS.

LINDA and Winifred were gone. Dan had taken them to the railroad at midnight, bidden them farewell, watched the two red lanterns upon the platform of the last car till they disappeared round a curve, and then returned with a heavy heart to Millbrook. A week had passed since their departure, a week of rain and storm, and no one had called at the cottage to see Linda, and not a soul in Millbrook besides Dan knew that she was gone.

Monday evening had come, and Mr. Meek and Moses were at supper. It was a cheerless meal, as were all their meals, with only the father, son, and Mrs. Tansey at the table. Moses was disgusted with the country. The summer boarders had taken their departure from Millbrook. The rain had been falling for a week, and it gave him the blues to stay there. The sun was shining again, but he would stay no longer in such a dismal place.

"I am going back to Boston to-night, father, and want some money," said Moses, breaking the silence.

"How much?"

"A thundering lot."

"How much is that?"

"Well, anywhere from three thousand upward."

"What!"

"Not less than three thousand."

"You are good at jokes."

"I am in earnest, father. I can't go back with less than that amount, and, while you are about it, you may as well make it an even five."

"Can't go with less than three, eh? Well, I hope you may get it," said the father, rising from the table as he finished his tea. Moses bit his lip, but made no reply.

Mr. Meek brushed his hair, put on his gloves, took his cane, and went out for a walk. He strolled leisurely up the hill to Linda's home, thinking what he should do if Linda should still persist in her determination not to marry him. Her rejection of his offer had but inflamed him all the more, and he determined to press his suit to the utmost. If she would not yield, he would ride over to Hilltown in the morning, where the court would be in session, and make application for the guardianship of Winifred.

Dan was sitting beneath the porch, playing his violin. With his mother away looking after the sick, with Linda and Winifred gone, the house was a lonely place.

He was playing the "Last Rose of Summer" as Mr. Meek approached.

"Solacing yourself with music, I see, Dan. You are a splendid player. You ought to go down to Boston; you might make your fortune playing to the city folks. They don't get such playing as yours every day."

"See here, Mr. Meek, that plaster won't stick. I know what is good playing, and what isn't. I can feel the music kinder rolling round inside of me, but I can't get it out. If I was a good player I could get hold of it. Did you ever think, Mr. Meek, how wonderful it is, this draw-

ing of horse-hair across catgut, and making sounds that will set people to laughing one moment and crying the next? There are some players that will make the catgut speak the words right out, but my playing is just sawing and nothing else. But I can feel the poems inside of me; they are there."

"You are altogether too modest. Dan; you are the prince of fiddlers."

Mr. Meek was not thinking what he was saying, but how to get Dan out of the way so that he could have a talk with Linda.

"I am just a fiddler, and nothing else," Dan replied.

"By the way, Dan, I have come up here and have forgotten half of my errand. I was going to bring a little package to Linda; you wasn't going down the street for any thing, was you?"

"No, I wasn't," said Dan, going on with his playing.

"How unfortunate! It was a bundle of vests for her to begin on in the morning. You don't want to run down and get them, do you, while I go in and have a little chat with her about making them up?"

"Well — no — I — don't know as — I — do," said Dan, speaking very slowly, and putting an *appogiatura* and *tremolo* into the strain he was playing.

"What do you call that?"

"In music they call it a '*poggitura*, but I call it the shaking of a lamb's tail."

"The what!"

"The shaking of a lamb's tail. You've seen little lambs wiggle their tails, haven't you?"

"Yes; but I never knew there was any thing in music like it."

"Oh, yes, see if there isn't;" and Dan repeated the *tremolo*,

putting in an extra shake so comically that Mr. Meek laughed heartily.

"I told you, Dan, that you ought to go to Boston. If you were to play for the Handel and Haydn Society, you would bring down the house every time."

"I shouldn't wonder, and maybe get kicked into the street. Oh, no, Mr. Meek, you can't lather me with such soft-soap as that."

"I guess I'll go in and see Linda a moment," said Mr. Meek.

He bowed from habit as he went into the sitting-room, but Linda was not there. He concluded that she must be somewhere about the house, and took a seat. He admired the tidiness of the room, and the flowers in the windows. He waited awhile, but as Linda did not make her appearance, went upon the porch again.

"Linda does not appear to be in," he said.

"Maybe she has gone out somewhere," Dan replied.

"I don't see Winifred about," Mr. Meek remarked, looking round.

"Perhaps they have gone out together," said Dan.

"She isn't in the parlor, is she?"

"I guess not."

Notwithstanding the answer, Mr. Meek concluded that Linda had gone into the parlor to avoid him.

"Perhaps she is in there. If she is, I would like to see her a moment."

"I don't think she is there, but we will see."

Dan opened the parlor door, and Mr. Meek himself saw that Linda was not there.

"Perhaps she is upstairs," he said.

"I haven't heard her stepping around up there," Dan replied.

"She may be there, for all that; suppose you step to the stairway and speak to her."

Dan opened the door leading to the chamber, and called, but there was no response. Although no answer, Mr. Meek was of the opinion that Linda was nevertheless in her chamber.

"Just say to her, Dan, that I wish very much to see her."

"Suppose you step here and speak to her yourself."

Mr. Meek, after reflecting a moment, concluded to do so. Linda would not be likely to remain silent if he himself were to address her. She was a perfect lady, and though she might wish to avoid him, would not treat him rudely.

"Miss Linda, I would like to see you a moment, if you please," said Mr. Meek, speaking up the stairway; but no answer came back to him.

"Perhaps the door of her room may be shut. Speak a little louder," said Dan.

"Miss Linda, will you please come down a moment?" shouted Mr. Meek.

No opening of a door, no footstep, nothing but the ticking of the old clock did Mr. Meek hear; but there was a grin on Dan's face.

"Linda's work doesn't seem to be lying around as it sometimes is."

"No, it doesn't, that's a fact," Dan replied, looking around the room.

"Maybe she has been washing to-day, and hasn't had time to do any sewing."

"Maybe. Did you ever think, Mr. Meek, that washing days are rather hard on the women?"

"Perhaps Linda is out in the orchard. You didn't see her go out there, did you?"

"No; but if you would like to see if she is there, you can go through the gate at the end of the shed."

Mr. Meek passed through the gate into the orchard, expecting to see Linda gathering some of the apples that had dropped from the trees during the storm, but did not find her. He returned to the porch. He noticed that there was a bright light in Dan's eye, and came to the conclusion that Dan was playing a game with him. If there was any thing in which Mr. Meek took pride, it was in his ability to see through a game. It was his business to play games upon other people, but never to permit one to be played on him. He would beat about the bush no longer.

"Do you know where she is?" he asked.

"There is where you've got me, Mr. Meek. I don't."

"Where do you think she is?"

"I haven't the least idea."

"Did she say which of the neighbors she was going to?"

"No; come to think of it, she didn't."

"How soon do you expect her back?"

"I haven't a single expectation about it."

"Which way do you think she has gone?"

"I rather think that she went up the road."

"How long has she been gone?"

"Well, let us see. To-day is Monday, yesterday was Sunday, that is two days; the day before was Saturday, that is three; the day before that was Friday, that is four; the day before that was Thursday, that is five; the day before that was Wednesday, that is six; the day before that was Tuesday, that is seven: seven days, Mr. Meek."

There was a provoking smile on Dan's face.

There were wrinkles in Mr. Meek's forehead, and he thrust his fingers into his whiskers.

"What! Seven days! Why didn't you tell me before? Here you have been fooling me for a half-hour, having me call up the chamber-stairs, and sending me into the orchard."

Mr. Meek grew red in the face as he thought of the game Dan had played upon him.

"See here, Mr. Meek, you didn't ask me when Linda went away. I told you I didn't think she was in the parlor, nor upstairs, but you would have me call, and you went into the orchard of your own accord."

"You always was a joker, Dan, but I'll be even with you some time."

Mr. Meek was nettled He sucked the head of his cane. He was also in a quandary. It was plain that Linda had gone away to avoid an interview. How much did Dan know in regard to the proposal he had made to Linda? He would make a few cautious inquiries.

"Then Linda went away a week ago, did she?"

"Yes."

"And took Winifred?"

"Yes."

"That is singular."

"I should say it was plural."

"Ho! ho! Yes, that's so."

"Did Linda say when she was coming back?"

"No."

"And you don't know?"

"No more than you do."

Mr. Meek wanted to ask a direct question, but hesitated. He drew some circles on the floor with his cane while thinking, as if drawing a horoscope in imitation of the astrologers of old.

"Did she give any reason for going away?"

"Dan had been thrumming his violin, but stopped, rested the instrument on his knee, and looked Mr. Meek in the face.

"See here, Mr. Meek, if this is a game at open and shut, it is about time for me to be putting a few questions; and as you only wanted to see Linda about making some vests, don't you think that you are putting considerable many?"

"Perhaps so; but, come to think of it, I wanted to see her about something else."

"It was about doing something for Golden Locks, wasn't it?"

"Yes, that was it."

"You want to educate her, don't you?"

"Yes; I told Linda I would be glad to do something for her."

"What sort of a proposition did you think of making?"

"That is my business," Mr. Meek replied sharply, not relishing the return fire that Dan was giving him. He determined to head him off.

"What reason did Linda give for going away?" he asked.

"I don't think I can remember exactly what she said, but the impression left on my mind was, that you had undertaken to play a pretty sharp game, and she would checkmate you. Come to think of it, Mr. Meek, I am inclined to think she is a little ahead."

"I see now that I was not particular enough in explaining my intentions."

"I think it would have been quite as well for you to have made your proposition a little different."

Mr. Meek winced. He saw what he had not seen till then, — that the whole thing would be made public.

Everybody would know that Linda had left town suddenly, and would be asking the reason, and as Dan knew all about it, his mouth must be stopped. It would not be pleasant to have Mr. Makepeace, Mr. Blossom, and everybody else, coming into the store, punching him in the ribs, and saying, "O Meek, to be checkmated by a girl! We didn't think that of you." Mrs. Gabberly would get hold of it, and would go from house to house saying, "Have you heard the news? Oh, my! Meek offered himself to Linda, and got the mitten, and was going to compel her to marry him by threatening to take away Winifred."

"To let you know, Dan, that I am actuated solely by a desire to do what I can to help Miss Fair, I shall not ask to be appointed guardian to Winifred, and as you probably know of a way by which you can communicate with her, I wish that you would say to her that I pledge my sacred word and honor not to do any thing which will not meet her full approval. I wish that you would so inform her at once; and meanwhile, if any inquiry is made as to the reason of her being away, you just trump up some sort of an excuse, and I will see that you are well rewarded. As evidence of my sincerity, just put that in your pocket."

Mr. Meek was about to put a five-dollar bill into Dan's hand, but Dan did not take it.

"You are barking up the wrong tree, Mr. Meek. In the first place, I have no idea as to Linda's whereabouts. She said she was going where all the Sheriffs in New Hampshire would not be able to bring her back. She didn't know, herself, where it would be. Now, seeing that is so, — and if it wasn't so it wouldn't make any difference, — I sha'n't trump up any story; and if folks ask me about it, I shall tell them the straight truth."

Mr. Meek was picking his whiskers as he never had

picked them before. He walked up and down the path, and came back, and stood before Dan.

"See here, sir," he said, with a flushed face, "you are at the bottom of all this. You are playing a game on me, and I don't intend to be made a fool of by a tin-peddler. If you won't accept my offer, I shall apply for the appointment as guardian to-morrow, and have an order issued upon you to produce Winifred. If you don't do it, you will take the consequences."

"All right, Mr. Meek; and just tell me what they will be, and I will be getting ready for 'em."

"If you don't produce her within a given time, you will be arraigned for contempt of court, and then you will have an opportunity to board at the jail awhile."

"How much do they charge a week?"

"More than you'll want to pay."

"Do they give good fodder?"

"You will find out."

"All right. It is worth while to find out things we don't know about. That is the way to get an education, ain't it?"

Mr. Meek had undertaken to play the game of bluff, and found himself beaten. He walked up and down the path again, twisting his whiskers furiously.

"See here, Dan," he said, stopping once more, "I don't want to send you to jail; it would about kill your mother."

"Oh, never mind mother; she will stand it. I ain't a mite afraid of that. She would a great deal rather have me go to jail than to trump up any story that wasn't true, and I should rather go than do it."

"Well, I don't want any trouble about it. Come, now, let us be good friends, as we always have been, and shake hands."

"Oh, certainly, I'm agreed."

And Dan, shifting his bow to his left hand, reached out his right, and shook hands with Mr. Meek.

"You must get Linda back, somehow; I don't care what it costs."

"I couldn't do it if you were to bring every dollar you have got in the world and lay it at my feet. I don't know where she is, and if you take me into court, I shall swear it."

The directness and earnestness with which the words were spoken, and Dan's well-known character for truthfulness and honesty convinced Mr. Meek that Linda was beyond any immediate recall. There was nothing more to be said, and he walked down the path chagrined at the position of affairs. As he passed through the gate he heard Dan striking into Yankee Doodle, which Mr. Meek thought sounded like a pæan of victory. He went down the road thinking he had not only made a fool of himself but that in a day or two everybody would know it.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DISAPPOINTMENTS.

WHILE Mr. Meek was having his interview with Dan, Bell Blossom was in her chamber giving herself up to reflection. It was a pleasant apartment. The first rays of the morning sun, streaming over the meadows and shimmering through the branches of the elms, came into it, and when the golden orb went down behind the western hills there was no more delightful place where one might sit and watch the glory fading from the sky. Bell was thinking as she never thought before — of the immediate future and what might be beyond it. She looked out upon the meadows, but could not enter into the peacefulness that rested upon them. She was troubled in mind; she had taken one false step, and was thinking of taking another. She had agreed with Moses to leave her home and go with him — not in open day, but under cover of the night — to become his wife. He had declared his undying love for her. She had tried to overcome the prejudices of her parents to him, but not having succeeded, was going with him to Boston, where they would be married, and then, after a few weeks, they would return and ask her parents' forgiveness, and all would be well. She could not be married at home against the wishes of her father and mother, and there was no other course.

In consenting to such an arrangement, Bell had gone contrary to her own sense of what was right. As a ship with loosened cables, though still moored to the pier, is swerved by the wind and the tide, so was she tossed by the conflicting emotions of love and duty.

It was on Saturday night that Bell had given her consent. Moses had arranged to call for her at midnight on Monday evening. She could not think of going in open day, of saying to her father and mother, "I am going away with Moses." The thought of the tears they would shed unnerved her. Nor did Moses want any parting scene; by going in the night and in secret all would be well. So it had been arranged. Sunday had been a doleful day. Through the dreary hours Bell had heard the raindrops falling on the withered leaves, and at times, as she sat in her silent chamber, the moisture had gathered in her eyes as she thought of the approaching hour. But love had charmed her with its rainbow hues, and she saw only the bright dreamland of the future.

Through the day the clouds had been moving toward the mountains, and there could be no fair weather till the wind sent them down the valley again. Were they typical of her life? Was not she herself going in the wrong direction after happiness? Like a shuttle-cock she was being thrown by conflicting emotions between I Ought Not and I Would, and I Would thus far had won.

But now the storm was over, and the skies were bright. The sun had gone down, and the stars were shining.

"So will the future be," said Bell to herself. "I love him and he loves me. Father and mother are prejudiced against Moses. They have forgotten their own early love."

Yet how could she go counter to their wishes?

"You can marry Moses if you choose, but it will be a great grief to us."

That had been her father's final answer. Bell could not forget the words, and at that evening hour they were coming to her as they never had come before; for the crickets had taken them up, and their monotonous chirping made them a doleful miserere.

"*Grief! grief! grief! grief!*" they said, as if for her there could be nothing but grief in life. "What a grief it will be to mother, when she comes up in the morning to see why I am not down to breakfast, only to find that I am not here." Grief! There it was again. How could she bring grief to one who had given her being? How could she, an only child, pain a mother's heart? And yet, on the other hand, how could she pull up by the roots, as it were, as if they were worthless weeds, all the love for Moses that had been springing up in her heart's garden from childhood?

"*Grief! grief! grief!*" went on the unceasing refrain.

It was not yet dark; there was enough of twilight still lingering to enable Bell to see who was passing. She heard footsteps on the sidewalk, and looking out, saw Dan, who had stopped in front of the house.

"Good-evening, Bell."

"Good-evening, Dan."

"I have a letter for you."

"A letter!"

"Yes; but don't come down. I will send it up to you in a giffy."

He picked up a chip, partially split it open with his knife, inserted the letter in the cleft, and tossed it into her window.

"Thank you."

Dan bowed and walked away.

"From Linda," said Bell to herself, looking at the handwriting in the twilight, and then striking a light. Thus it re[illegible]:

DEAR BELL: —

When you are reading this I shall be far away, but where, I do not know. And now I am going to tell you why I leave home so suddenly, that you may have the exact truth, and not what Mrs. Gabberly or any one else may say."

Then came the account of the advances and proposition made by Mr. Meek.

Now you know all. When I shall return, or what is before me, I do not know. I only know that I am doing right. O Bell! this doing right always gives unspeakable joy. I shall long to see your smiling face. I shall long to feel the clasp of your loving hand. You win all hearts. Everybody loves you. You are your father's idol; his life is bound up in yours. I have sometimes thought, perhaps you did not know how dear you are to him. If you want to fill his life with peace, don't ever do any thing that will give him pain.

You know that we talked over the matter between yourself and Moses the other day. You know what I said then, and now, after mature reflection, I have come to the conclusion he is not worthy of your love.

I know that it is hard to forget all the sweet past, to turn our faces from the scenes that enchanted us, but there can be no disappointment more terrible than the waking from a dream of bliss, and finding that what we thought was worthy of our love is as false as it was fair. O Bell! I know all about it, but I have cast the past behind my back, and I go out to do my appointed work in life, whatever it may be. I loved Caleb with my whole soul, and I shall never give my affections to another. I wish him nothing but happiness with the one whom he has chosen. That she will make him happier than I ever could have done, I do not doubt; but I know that her love never can be truer than mine has been to him.

There are some things in life worse than maidenhood to be borne, and so, with composure, if not with cheerfulness, I take up my burden, and shall carry it as I can, knowing that time will diminish its weight, and that by-and-by it will cease to be a burden.

You may never see me again this side the Better Land, but God bless and keep you, Bell, and make you a blessing to the world.

LINDA.

Astonished, amazed, Bell read the letter a second time to satisfy herself that it was not a dream. Mr. Meek offering himself to Linda! threatening to take away Winifred if she would not accept him! Linda gone! Was it possible? And she herself was about to run away with this man's son!

Bell read once more the sober, earnest words which Linda had written in regard to herself and her parents, and as she read them, the glamour of love which had rested upon her passed away, and she saw the character of the father and the character of the son as never before. Her love to Moses had been so great that she had excused all his faults, but now, as in the light of a magnifier, she saw how glaring they were.

"He is not worthy of your love," that was Linda's judgment; and Linda's mind was so clear that she always saw things in their true light.

The twilight was gone. From field and pasture and wayside still sounded the miserere — grief! grief! grief! but mingled with the monody was the prayer, "God bless and keep you, Bell."

While Bell was thus reflecting, Moses was pacing up and down the counting-room, waiting for his father. Mr. Meek entered the apartment, at length, still disturbed in mind at the checkmate he had received from Linda, and thought that all Millbrook would hear of it.

"I have been waiting for you this hour, father, to have you come and shell out that money," said Moses.

"It seems to me that you are spending a good deal of money these days," Mr. Meek replied.

"Well, how in thunder is a fellow to get along without spending money, I should like to know? If you want me to live on water-gruel, bean-porridge and hasty pud-

ding, all I have to say is, I sha'n't do it. You forget that I move in the best society. The gentlemen that I associate with spend five, ten, and even twenty thousand a year, some of them. A man can't be stingy, and associate with genteel society. Now you have got a plenty of money, and so long as you have enough to enable me to live in good style, there is no reason why I should be pinched; you have got to hand over, that is all."

"That is pretty smart talk for a boy to make to his father."

"It is because the father has got a smart boy," Moses replied. The father was forced to smile. He was pleased; he liked smartness.

"Well, my boy, I have been generous with you, and still want to be, but as for supplying you with ten thousand, or five thousand, a year, I sha'n't do it. You have got to earn, at least, the salt in your porridge, which you haven't done yet."

"You can't expect a fellow to earn his living till he gets started, especially in the law, where the pettifoggers are as thick as grasshoppers? Till I get fairly going, you must supply the funds. I can't go back with less than five thousand dollars."

"What do you want to do with five thousand dollars?"

"There is my office rent — and rents are high; there are my board bills, club bills, bills at the livery stable, cigar bill, and lots of others. And then a fellow who goes in first-class society can't get along without good wines. You can't palm off New Jersey cider for champagne. We are accustomed to genuine green seal. A fellow can't be mean; he would be cut dead if there was the least suspicion that he was not all that he professed to be. The society that I go in is the very soul of honor. and you

don't want me to disgrace myself and you too, do you? The fact is, father, you who live up here in the country, have no idea as to how much it costs a fellow, who is anybody, to get on in Boston. You can't shin along on fifty cents a day, nor five dollars a day; you have got to do the square thing. There are so many little items, that five thousand melts away like a snow-bank under the fence on a hot spring day."

Moses stopped to see what effect the plea had made, but Mr. Meek said nothing.

"Now see here, father. I know that you have five thousand dollars in the safe, here. I saw you put it in this afternoon, and you have got to hand it over, that is all there is about it. I want it now, for I have got to leave pretty soon, to get to the cars before the express gets along."

"Will you take it now, or wait till you can get it?"

"I will take it now."

"Then I'll let you wait till you can get it," said the father, rising and going out.

Moses sat a few moments rubbing his chin with his hand, then wrote a few lines on a slip of paper. He closed the door of the counting-room, stepped to the safe, and manipulated the combination lock. Having been at home so long, and having had the care of the mails during Mr. Sharp's absence, he had been intrusted with the combination pertaining to the lock. The door of the safe opened readily. He took a package from the inner till marked "$5000," and put it into his pocket, leaving the slip of paper in its place, closed the safe, and passed out of the store, humming a song.

The bell struck twelve, midnight, and, as the last stroke died away, a covered buggy stopped in front of Mr.

Blossom's house. The curtains to Bell's windows were down ; there was no light visible about the premises, but the front door slowly opened.

"By George! she's on hand. I was afraid she wouldn't be. She's mine," said Moses to himself. He was mistakén, however. It was not Bell, but her father, who stood on the threshold.

"Bell has concluded not to go with you, Moses," said Mr. Blossom.

The whip came down upon the flanks of the horse, and the buggy went rattling down the road at a rapid rate. So Moses took his departure from Millbrook, — but not as he had anticipated, with a confiding girl sitting by his side. While riding to the railroad, he had abundant leisure to reflect upon the proverb —

"There is many a slip
Between the cup and the lip."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A SHIPWRECK.

CALEB was once more in his own room, but how small and mean it seemed after occupying the spacious and gorgeously-furnished apartment at the Wayland mansion. He was endeavoring to resume his studies, but his mind refused to grapple with the knotty questions of the legal profession which he was trying to master. In regard to John Doe and Richard Roe, he could not tell which was which, or what was what. The printed page itself was all confusion, the lines running together, and the whole becoming an incomprehensible muddle. He clasped his throbbing brow with his hands, and leaned back in his chair. In spite of all his efforts to keep them back, the tears came into his eyes. He was ashamed of himself for being a baby, but he was weak, irresolute and powerless. He had taken his departure from the Wayland mansion against the protestations of Bertha and Doctor Tragacanth, and now he was broken down, with a dark future before him. There was a knock at the door, and Dr. Tragacanth entered.

"Good-morning, Mr. Krinkle. I was down this way, and thought I would just drop in and shake hands with you. How are you getting on?"

"I have rather a bad headache to-day. Perhaps I have tried to study too much."

"Ain't quite yourself, eh?"

"Not quite."

"Head a little confused?"

"That is just it, doctor."

"Can't put this, that and the other together?"

"No, I can't tell whether John Doe is plaintiff or defendant."

"Hand trembles a little now and then?"

Caleb had not thought of it before, but, now that the Doctor mentioned it, he could feel that his nerves were unstrung.

"See here, young man, do you know where you are going?"

"I ain't going anywhere, that I am aware of."

"Oh, yes, you are; you are going about as fast as you can travel to the asylum for the insane."

"Oh, no, Doctor; I ain't as bad off as that."

"Keep on, and you will get there. You are about as I expected to find you. While you were on Beacon Street I saw that you were like a hyena in a cage; you chafed over your confinement, and were not getting on well because you could not bear to accept the hospitality of Miss Wayland, and I consented to your coming away, although knowing that you would be as weak as a baby in a few days, and here you are with your nerves trembling like the leaves of an aspen in the lightest breeze, and the print on the page is dancing a jig before your eyes, and your brain is buzzing like a bumble bee."

The Doctor had so accurately described his condition that Caleb could not dispute the conclusion he had drawn from the premises. His brain *was* in a whirl, and he was startled at the thought of what might happen to him.

"What am I to do, Doctor?"

"That is just what I want to talk about. In the first place, we will throw aside all these sheepskin volumes." The Doctor, suiting the action to the word, closed "Chitty on Contracts," and laid it one side.

"There, we've done with that for the present. Now just put on your hat, and take a ride with me; fresh air will do you good."

Caleb took a seat in the Doctor's chaise. They drove by the Common, up Beacon Street, past the Wayland mansion, where Bertha was sitting by the window. She bowed to them. The Doctor drove on past the State House and the Atheneum, and made his way to Pemberton Square."

"I have an acquaintance in here who has some light and agreeable work on hand that he cannot attend to himself, and as you are just the one to do it, I have brought you round to see him," said the Doctor.

They went up a flight of stairs, and entered the office of Mr. Asset, manager of estates. Mr. Asset was a white-haired, dignified gentleman, past the prime of life. His side-whiskers were neatly trimmed, and he wore gold-bowed spectacles. He was sitting at a desk, with numerous papers in pigeon-holes and on file before him.

"This is the young gentleman I was speaking to you about," said the doctor.

Mr. Asset bowed, greeted Caleb cordially, and invited him to a seat. "I have some wild lands in my care at the headwaters of the Androscoggin," said Mr. Asset, "that need looking after. There are taxes to be paid, some boundaries to be looked up and lines run. The people up that way, sometimes, by mistake or otherwise, get over the lines and cut timber that does not belong to them, and they need looking after; and, as

I cannot go myself and attend to the matter, I am in need of some one to do it for me. Doctor Tragacanth was kind enough to mention your name. Would you like to undertake the service?"

"I would like very much to undertake the service, if you think that I am competent to perform it," Caleb replied, overjoyed at the prospect which had opened so suddenly before him, of getting out into the fresh air.

"I think that you need have no apprehension on that score. You probably will need to be absent several months. You will take your own time, and, in regard to remuneration, I wish to make it perfectly satisfactory, and your expenses will be paid. Would a salary at the rate of three thousand dollars a year be an adequate compensation, do you think?"

If Mr. Asset had said to him, "I have a big pile of money lying round loose, here, just help yourself," Caleb could not have been more surprised.

"Oh, I think that is a great deal too much. I cannot possibly render you any service that can be worth that sum per annum."

"Perhaps you had better let me be judge of that," said Mr. Asset, smiling. "So, if you have no objection, we will consider it settled. Now here is a map of the locality that you are to visit, and you will find in this pile of papers a description of the lands. You need not look at them now, but take them with you, and call upon me again, after you have examined them."

Not till Caleb was in his room again, with the papers spread out before him, did he see through the matter. When he saw that the lands he was to look after belonged to the estate of John Wayland, deceased, he understood that it was Bertha's stratagem to give him employment.

She had taken this method of showing her gratitude. He saw that Mr. Asset was only her business manager, and was acting under her direction. How kind! how considerate! At the proper time he would thank her from an overflowing heart. Not only had it been arranged for him to have employment, but Mr. Asset had said, "If you wish to make a little visit to your old home, do so. Take your own time. He saw that it was Bertha, and not Mr. Asset, who had developed the plan.

Caleb had maintained a constant correspondence with Linda. He had lived upon her letters as the children of Israel lived upon manna in desert, — but suddenly they stopped coming. Since his convalescence he had written frequently, but had received no replies. Could it be that Linda was stricken down with sickness? Surely, nothing else would prevent her writing. The thought that now he was to see her, was a medicine. It gave life and vigor and an exhilaration of spirit such as he had not experienced for many months. He was impatient to be gone.

The time arrived for his departure. He was pacing up and down the depot, waiting for the starting of the train. Men with valises and carpet-bags, and women with shawls and bundles in their hands, were hurrying to secure their seats in the cars. Amid the hurry and bustle, Caleb felt a hand laid upon his arm, and, turning, beheld Bertha.

"I was out for a morning walk, and knowing that you were going to leave the city by this train to look after my interests, I thought that I would see you off," she said.

"You are very kind, and I cannot express my obligations to you." He wanted to add, "for arranging this trip for me, and for putting me in a way to earn so much money." But it might bring a flush to her cheeks, and he did not speak the words.

"You will take good care of yourself, will you not?" said Bertha.

"I will try to."

The bell rang. They shook hands, and the train moved away. She walked along the platform retaining his hand, till compelled to relinquish it by the movement of the cars, and then waved him good-bye with her handkerchief.

It was not the touch of her hand, nor the sweetness of her voice, but rather the light of her eyes that haunted him as he sat in the car, absorbed in thought. Even while he was reading the morning paper about a terrible storm on the lakes, — the wreck of sailing vessels, the sinking of a steamer, and the fearful loss of life, he was thinking of the deep, earnest look that Bertha had given him.

Gradually he became absorbed in the account of the sinking of the steamer, as told by the mate, who, with a few of the crew and passengers, had floated to the shore on pieces of the wreck. This was the mate's story: —

"The steamer sailed from Buffalo for Chicago. She had a large number of passengers. Every stateroom and berth was occupied. Besides the cabin passengers, we had a full complement in the steerage — Norwegian and German emigrants bound for Minnesota.

"We had fine weather till past Makinac, and then there came up a stiff breeze which increased to a gale, and by the time we were opposite 'Death's Door,' — the entrance to Green Bay, — it became a hurricane. The wind caught the crests of the waves, cut them off as with a knife and hurled them into the air, filling it with blinding mist. The rollers, one after another, struck against the bows of the steamer, making it tremble from stem to stern. The wind, which had been blowing from the south-west, suddenly

shifted to the north-east, and produced a cross sea, in which we tossed, tumbled and rolled, the waves meanwhile smashing the bulwarks, and sweeping every thing from the decks.

"The clouds hung dark and low. There were vivid lightnings and terrific thunders. Then night came on, and with the darkness there came a fiercer wind, a more furious uproar. When the storm was wildest the steamer refused to obey her helm, and then we discovered that the rudder-post was cracked. We got a spar aft, lashed it across the stem, reeved ropes through the blocks at the ends, and then Tom Jones, — as brave a fellow as ever lived, — volunteered to be let down to fasten them to the rudder-blade. We tied a rope around his body under his arms and let him down. He got a foothold on the rudder, but there came a great wave; we felt that there was some thing heavy on the end of the rope and drew it up, only to see that his head had been banged to a jelly!

"Then we drifted. We pitched head foremost into the trough of the sea, and couldn't help ourselves. I calculated we should strike about midnight, and we did — with a shock that knocked the passengers from their berths. Some of the emigrants rushed upon the deck in the darkness, and were swept away in a twinkling. We could hear their cries for a moment, and then there was nothing but the storm.

"At daybreak we could see a low sandy beach, white with foam, and a dark forest beyond it. I knew that the steamer would not last long, and the passengers knew it. We tried to get out the boats, but they were stove one after another. Then the passengers were in despair. Some of them rushed here, and there wringing their hands and smiting their breasts. Others sat down and covered

their faces with theirs to shut the scene from sight. Others shouted themselves hoarse in calling for help, when no human aid could come to them. Others, still, lowered the last boat, leaped into it, only to be hurled into the sea and disappear beneath the waves.

"Amid the frantic throng, there was one young lady so calm and self-possessed that all had marked her composure. She was an American, who, with a little girl, had taken a passage in the cabin from Buffalo. The child had golden hair, and I remember of seeing the lady smoothing it with her hand, and of hearing her say to the child, 'Don't be afraid, darling, we are just as near Our Father's home here as anywhere else.' Then she tried to comfort a poor German and his wife whose children had been swept away. The man could speak a little English, and the lady was saying to him that though he had left his fatherland to seek a home in this country, there was a better country whither his children had gone, the land of the All Father. And why weep for them, if it was the Father's will that he should join them before the day was ended?"

"By her coolness, the lady did more to restore order and discipline than the captain by his commands. Gradually the steamer began to break up. Suddenly there came a huge billow that swept over the wreck, breaking bolts, wrenching timber from timber, and plank from plank. The wind had partially changed, and some portions floated seaward and others landward. I had lashed myself to a spar, and floated. I could see the passengers clinging to the fragments of the wreck, dropping off one by one. Gradually I drifted landward, and was thrown ashore."

In addition to this story, as told by the mate, were other accounts gathered from the few that had been saved, and they all made mention of a calm and self-possessed lady and a sweet child with golden hair.

Terrible the loss of life, — out of more than two hundred persons on board, not fifty saved! Caleb ran his eye over the list of the rescued, but saw no familiar name. An acquaintance — a young man — had just gone West, and the thought came that possibly he might have taken passage on the ill-fated steamer. Then he looked at the list of those on board when the steamer sailed from Buffalo. Suddenly his eye was arrested. He started in amazement. What! Was it the hallucination of a disordered brain, or was it reality? He rubbed his eyes and looked again, and read the names —

"Linda Fair.

Winifred Vanzant."

What was the meaning of it? "Linda Fair and Winifred Vanzant!" he repeated to himself. So there were two Linda's and two Winifred's in the world, or had been. It could not be that this was his own Linda. She had not gone West. It must be a coincidence. Were there not one hundred or more John Smith's in Boston, and four or five times that number in New York? It could not have been his own Linda, nor could it have been Winifred Vanzant of Millbrook. Whoever they were, however, they were among the lost, and somebody would mourn for them. A few more hours, and he would see his own Linda. So thinking, he tried to dismiss the catastrophe from his mind, but with only partial success. Linda Fair and Winifred Vanzant among the lost! The words still haunted him.

The cars reached the Junction, and Caleb took a seat in Peter Smart's coach. There was but one other passenger, — a gentleman with keen black eyes and smoothly-shaven face.

"May I ask if you are travelling far?" the gentleman inquired.

"I am going to my native place, Millbrook."

"It is a very nice town, I understand."

"Very pleasant in summer, and even now, in September, you will find it having a beauty of its own."

"It must be delightful for you to go back to your old home to see your father and mother."

"They are not living," Caleb replied.

"Pardon me. Then, however great your pleasure may be, your visit will have its sad associations."

"I should not go, only I am on my way to another section of the country, and as my letters to Millbrook seem to have miscarried of late, or rather, as I have had no answers to them, I wanted to see what was the matter."

The gentleman looked at him sharply, Caleb thought.

"The mails are very irregular these days. I, myself, have had several letters miscarry of late. I hope that yours contained nothing valuable," said the gentleman.

"Oh, no; they were only friendly letters. I fear, however, that the person to whom they were addressed may be sick."

"The lady, you mean. Excuse me, but I surmise that there is a lady in the case. I hope that you will find her well."

"Thank you, sir. There is a lady, I am happy to say, in the case."

The gentleman went on to ask about Millbrook: how large a place it was; how much business was done there; how many stores there were; and having ascertained that Mr. Meek did a large business, he wanted to know what sort of a man he was; how much family he had; how many clerks he employed. The questioning seemed to be carried on with a view of making himself acquainted with the place and the people, as if he had a particular object in view.

"Do you think that it would be a good place to set up a shoe manufactory?"

Caleb came to the conclusion that the man was in the shoe business, and was on the lookout for an eligible location to start a manufactory.

"Perhaps so. The people now are doing a good deal in the manufacture of clothing, which Mr. Meek is carrying on."

The gentleman made a memorandum in his note-book, and gave himself up to thought the remainder of the journey.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE GREAT SORROW.

IT was noon when the stage rolled up the wide and level street beneath the elms of Millbrook. When opposite the house of Mr. Blossom, Peter Smart chirruped to his team, just as he had for a third of a century, and the horses quickened their pace. Caleb looked out of the coach, thinking that possibly Bell might be sitting by the window, or that he should see her in the garden, or in the yard in front of the house, but she was not in sight. The Newfoundland dog, that had trotted by his side and licked his hand in that early morning when he left Millbrook, was standing by the roadside wagging his tail.

"How do you do, Pedro?"

Don Pedro gave a bark of welcome, and trotted by the coach, looking up with almost human eyes at Caleb.

The stage whirled up to the hotel. The landlord was standing upon the piazza, but his eyes were getting dim, and he did not recognize Caleb, who bade his fellow-passengers good-bye, and went up the hill at a rapid rate toward Linda's home. He would not stop at the hotel for dinner, but would take Linda by surprise. How delightful it would be to see the glad look on her face, to hear her voice once more!

Before him was the cottage. The vine overspreading the porch was growing as luxuriantly as ever; the blue smoke was curling up from the chimney as he had seen it in other days. He was by the gate, — the spot where he had said, "In God's good time I will come to you," and he had kept his promise. Then the roses were in bloom, but on that September day the leaves were brown and sear, and there were red seed-bulbs instead of fragrant flowers. The thought came, "Do human lives ever run to seed? Does human character blossom and decay, and bear in its death the power of reproduction? Will there any thing ever come out of my life?"

The past came over him in a great wave as he stood there in the path bordered by decaying flowers. Below him was his old home. The house needed repainting. The green blinds were faded. Some of the palings about the garden were broken. Mr. Meek had not kept the premises neat and trim.

He approached the house, and saw, through the open door, Mrs. Dishaway and Dan sitting at the dinner-table.

"How do you do?" said Caleb, as he stood in the doorway. Dan arose, came toward him, and looked at him a moment.

"Is it Caleb, or somebody else?"

"It is Caleb."

"Well, how do you do?" said Dan, shaking hands.

"This is unexpected," said Mrs. Dishaway, giving him a kiss, but looking at him keenly. It was not a very cordial reception. What was the meaning of it? And no Linda or Winifred present, — what was the meaning of that?"

"Where is Linda?" Caleb asked, with the words "Linda Fair and Winifred Vanzant" coursing through his brain.

"Gone," said Dan.

"Gone!"

Caleb staggered to a chair, sat down, and gasped for breath.

"Tell me about her, please," he said at length.

"Caleb," said Dan, "let us understand one another at the outset. What have you come here for?"

"What have I come here for?"

The words were little more than a whisper, and the lips were white that uttered them.

"Yes, sir."

"I thought that I should see Linda. Why didn't you send word to me that —" He could not finish the sentence.

"Send word to a scoundrel!" Dan exclaimed.

"O Dan, I never expected this from you!" Caleb gasped.

"Why shouldn't I say it? Haven't you deserted the best girl that ever lived, and taken up with another for the sake of getting her money? I didn't think you could be capable of such meanness. When you get it, it may turn to dross in your hands."

Caleb could make no reply. He had not even strength to ask for an explanation. Linda was gone, and it must have been his own Linda that had perished on the ill-fated steamer.

"It is very cool in you to come here as you have, Caleb. I wonder that the words did not blister your tongue when you asked for her."

"Hush, hush, Dan!" said Mrs. Dishaway, noticing the struggle which Caleb was having with his emotions.

"What is the meaning of all this?" Caleb asked.

"Didn't Moses come home from Boston and tell everybody you had saved that rich girl's life, and that the chances were you would marry her? Didn't Mrs. Gabberly tell us that she saw you down on the beach with her, as

loving as two doves? If it ain't so, why didn't you answer Linda's letters?"

"Why didn't I answer her letters? I wrote to her as soon as I could hold a pen, and have written often since. Why did she not write to me?"

"She did, and you took no notice of her. You filled her life with sorrow, and now that she is gone, you come here to accuse her of perfidy."

"O Dan! I never could have believed that in the hour of the greatest grief that ever can come to me you could be so cruel."

Caleb covered his face with his hands and leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees, overwhelmed by the great wave of sorrow which had rolled so suddenly upon him. Dan did not know what to make of it. Evidently there was something that needed to be explained. Besides, he was touched by Caleb's emotion.

"I don't understand you, White Hair," he said at length.

"Now that Linda is dead, let us have no recrimination," said Caleb.

"Linda dead! Who said she was dead? I said she was gone, — gone to escape the clutches of that mean, contemptible scoundrel, Meek!" Dan exclaimed.

Caleb made no reply, but took the newspaper from his pocket, and, pointing to the account of the terrible disaster, handed it to Dan, turning away, unable longer to conceal his emotions.

Dan saw the capitals at the head of the account. His eye ran down the page, and saw the names, Linda Fair and Winifred Vanzant among the lost. The paper dropped from his hands. He groaned in agony.

Leave them there — the stricken ones — estranged no longer, but weeping together over the terrible news.

The mournful intelligence meanwhile was abroad. The landlord was reading it in the hotel; the clerks were reading it in the store; Mr. Makepeace was reading it in his office, and Mrs. Gabberly was telling it from house to house. It was a sad afternoon in Millbrook. Everybody knew that Linda had fled to baffle Mr. Meek in his designs, for Bell had read Linda's letter to her intimate friends. Fleeing from one peril she had gone to another infinitely greater, and had perished.

We value our treasures most when we have lost them. Not till our loved ones have left us do we fully comprehend how dear they were. How hard to realize that they never will return, that we never again shall take them by the hand! Then we think of the many things we wanted to do for them; then we recall their virtues; then we know how kind and good and lovable they were.

The people in Millbrook had loved Linda for her kindness and goodness, and had respected her for her womanhood and her nobility of character. While a girl in years, she had been a true woman in all her actions. Young gentlemen who had talked familiarly with Bell, and other young ladies, studied their words when conversing with Linda. Her mates, when in trouble, came to her for advice and consolation, and now their adviser and consoler was gone, never to return. Now they remembered that she had ever been ready to help when help was needed, that she had been to those in distress a comforter, wise when everybody else was perplexed, cheerful when others were down-hearted. Millbrook would be lonely now.

The people were indignant at the course pursued by Mr. Meek. Linda's death could be laid at his door, and not only Linda's, but Winifred's. No need now for Mr. Meek to ask Dan to send for Linda; she had gone where no

human voice could reach her. No need now to make application for the guardianship of Winifred; the waves would not give her up.

Mr. Meek was in trouble. While there was a rising of indignation against Mr. Meek on the part of the people there was also an uprising of Mr. Meek's conscience against himself. He reproached himself for what he had done. Sharp and shrewd and unscrupulous as he was in business, wicked as he had been in life, he was not wholly lost to moral responsibility. He walked up and down the apartment in agony, wishing that he could blot out the past; that he could call the dead to life. One by one his bright dreams of life had faded; one by one his plans had been overturned. For the past there was nothing but reproach, while the future was utterly cheerless.

Sunday morning came. Mournfully tolled the bell — tolling for the loved and lost. The people on their way to meeting thought only of her whom they had seen so often walking beneath the elms and glorifying the day by her presence. Nevermore would they see the little flock of children, her class in the Sunday school running to clasp her by the hand. It would have been some consolation to have thought of her as asleep in the yard behind the church, beside her father and mother, and there would have been some relief to their sorrow if they could have gazed upon her new-made grave, but now they could only think of the terrible scene of the shipwreck, and of the winds and waves as forever chanting a dirge for her.

Deeper their grief when they entered the church, and saw her vacant chair in the singers' seats, and a black mantle lying upon it, and the organ draped in mourning, — for so had the members of the choir manifested their sorrow. When

the bell had ceased its tolling, and the minister was ascending the pulpit stairs, the organ began to play. Mournful the strain. Then with hushed voices the choir sang, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." But the tears of the congregation flowed afresh when they missed the one sweet voice that had so often thrilled them. They thought of it as hushed on earth, but tuneful evermore in heaven.

Then the minister, with faltering voice, prayed that the great affliction might be for their earthly and eternal good, that he who had fondly hoped to spend his years on earth with her, might think of her as having gone on before him to a better world, and that such a life as hers for whom he mourned — so brief and yet so full, so rounded and complete, might ever be a blessed remembrance. And that the congregation, as they recalled her deeds of kindness, her goodness, her devotion to truth, her consecration to every good work, might they be moved to emulate her example.

CHAPTER XL.

WHAT MR. KETCHUM DISCOVERED.

MR. MEEK was in his counting-room, and the spiders were looking at him. Never before had they seen such angry wrinkles in his forehead; never before had they seen him pluck his whiskers so furiously. Having opened a draw in his safe, to take a look at a package marked "$5000," he had found a slip of paper instead, and this was what he was reading: —

FATHER: If you thought I was going back to Boston without a cent of money in my pocket, you was confoundedly mistaken. As you wouldn't give down, I have helped myself. I am much obliged to you for this, but shall want a lot more by-and-by MOSES.

"So that is the way he does it!" said Mr. Meek to himself. "That is the boy I've brought up; labored for; raked and scraped for! A fine lawyer he'll make! His speeches in Congress will astonish the world! He'll reflect honor on his father! Will want more when that is gone! This all comes from letting him know the combination of the lock. But I'll have my revenge on him! He has left his trunk behind, and has sent up word to have Peter Smart take it down this very afternoon, but we will see about that."

Mr. Meek looked at his watch and saw that it was quite time for Peter to be along, and so, putting on his hat, went

into the street. He saw the stage coming over the hill and turning up to his house to take on the trunk. Quickening his pace, he reached the house just as John and the driver were lifting it upon the rack.

"See here, you may just take that off again," said Mr. Meek.

"How's that?" Peter asked.

"It isn't to go."

"I have a letter from Moses, requesting me to call for it," said the driver.

"I countermand the order. He's been playing a little game upon me, and I'll do what I can to be even with him. Take the trunk into the house again, John."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said Peter, looking keenly at Mr. Meek, — noticing that he was a good deal disturbed.

John carried the trunk into the hall, and the stage rolled on. Mr. Meek noticed a gray-bearded man, with sharp eyes, in the coach. He thought that he had seen those eyes somewhere, but could not recall the time or place. He went back to his counting-room, meditating upon what sort of a letter he should write to Moses.

During the afternoon a gentleman entered the store, and introduced himself as Mr. Ketchum.

"I would like to see you a few moments on a private matter, if you please," said Mr. Ketchum.

"Oh, certainly," said Mr. Meek, inviting him into the counting-room and closing the door.

The man was smoothly shaven, and had eyes so like those of the gray-bearded man, whom he had seen in the coach, that Mr. Meek could have almost taken his oath that the gentlemen must be brothers.

"A sharp man, — a man who is after something in particular. I must have my wits about me," said Mr. Meek to himself.

"I am an agent of the Post Office Department, Mr Meek, and as there have been some irregularities connected with the mails in this region, of late, I have called to make what investigation I can as to the cause, and am sorry to say that there are some suspicions, — well grounded, I fear they may be, — in regard to this office!"

"This office!" Mr. Meek exclaimed.

"Reports have come to the Department," Mr. Ketchum went on, "that money, to a considerable amount, has been abstracted from the mails, and I wish to ascertain, if possible, who the guilty party may be. Of course, no suspicion attaches to yourself, for it is very well understood that, though you are post-master, you have little or nothing to do with exchanging or sorting the mail."

"I will aid you in every possible way."

"You have several clerks, I notice."

"Yes, sir; but I cannot imagine which of them can be the guilty party. I have placed unbounded confidence in them all."

"We will not mistrust anyone until we can get hold of some evidence. Men are presumed to be innocent until found guilty."

Mr. Meek was glad to see that Mr. Ketchum was so considerate.

"The irregularities commenced some two or three months ago, and they have continued till the present time. Now, were any of your clerks absent during that time?"

"Yes; my head salesman, Mr. Sharp, has been absent and has but just returned."

"Then we can say at the outset that no suspicion can attach to him. How many other employees have you?"

"Three."

"Do they all have a hand in making-up and sorting the mails?"

"Not necessarily; it is Mr. Sharp's business."

"But he has not been here."

"My son has been doing it in his absence." Mr. Meek said it with visible emotion.

"It is a painful duty that I have to perform, Mr. Meek, but I cannot turn back from it. I wish to do every thing in a quiet way, and if you please, I should like to examine the chamber which your son occupied when he was at home. He is in Boston now, I believe?"

Mr. Meek bowed, but was astonished to hear it. How did Mr. Ketchum know that Moses was in Boston? He could not imagine.

"I will show the chamber to you with the greatest pleasure," Mr. Meek replied, confident that if Moses had taken any thing from the mails, he had been smart enough to destroy all evidence of the fact.

Little did Mr. Meek suspect, as they walked down the street, that the smooth-faced gentleman by his side was the same individual that he had seen in Millbrook ten days before wearing green goggles, and dressed in sheep's gray. Little did the clerks comprehend that the gentleman who had just gone out with Mr. Meek, was the gawkey fellow with a shock of red hair and red whiskers, who came into the store one noon and bought a couple of crackers and a piece of cheese for his dinner, and while Moses was changing the mail, stood gaping at him to see how he did it, taking now a bite at the cheese and now at the cracker, and when he had finished his lunch filled an old short-stemmed pipe with tobacco, and while smoking, undertook to read the hand-bills on the walls. Little did Mr. Meek mistrust that the gray-bearded gentleman whom he had seen in the coach a few hours before and the smoothly-shaved gentleman with whom he was that moment talking

were one and the same, and that Mr. Ketchum, by his disguises, by his sharp eyes, had obtained such a chain of circumstances that he was very sure Moses Meek was was at the bottom of all the irregularities in the mails on that route. Little did Caleb mistrust that the man who was going to set up a shoe manufactory, was Mr. Ketchum, special detective of the Post Office Department, on the track of Moses.

Mr. Meek and Mr. Ketchum went into Moses' chamber, and the detective examined the draws in the bureau, turned over the things in the closet, and on the table, but discovered nothing.

"We will now look at your son's trunk, if you please," said Mr. Ketchum."

"You forget that my son is in Boston," said Mr. Meek.

"No; I know very well that he is there, but his trunk is down-stairs in the hall."

Mr. Meek was astonished. Who was this man? How did he know the trunk was there?

"I have no key that will open it." said Mr. Meek.

"Perhaps we shall be able to get it open, nevertheless. We will look at it, if you please."

They descended the stairs, and Mr. Ketchum, after examining the lock a moment, selected a key from one of many in his pocket, and opened the trunk. He took up a package.

"Perhaps you understand what this is?" said the detective.

"Postage stamps, I suppose," Mr. Meek replied, his heart sinking within him as he recognized a government package.

Further examination brought to light drafts, checks, photographs and envelopes, directed to well-known business men as well as to publishers of newspapers.

"Your son was not very skillful in covering up his tracks."

Mr. Meek made no reply. Mr. Ketchum having taken possession of the articles he had found, closed the trunk, re-locked it, and the two walked back towards the store.

"Will you please come into the counting-room; I want to have a little talk upon this unpleasant business," said Mr. Meek.

"With pleasure, sir, but I will go to my room in the hotel a moment first," Mr. Ketchum replied.

The detective passed on to the hotel, while Mr. Meek went into his counting-room and sat down to reflect upon the state of affairs. While sitting there, he saw Mr. Ketchum in consultation with a man upon the piazza of the Flying Eagle.

Mr. Ketchum looked at his watch, and sat down to write something upon a slip of paper, while the other went into the stable. A moment later, the hostler was harnessing a horse. A thought came to Mr. Meek. He opened a draw, took up a field-glass, and brought Mr. Ketchum so near that he could see that the paper in his hand was a blank of the Western Union Telegraph Company.

Mr. Ketchum finished his writing, and gave it to the other, who drove away in a buggy at a rapid pace, while he himself went into the hotel.

John, who was exercising Mr. Meek's fast-trotting horse, drove up at the moment, and halted before the door of the store, thinking perhaps that Mr. Meek might want to take a little drive. But Mr. Meek was thinking of something else.

"It closes at eight. John is here. I can get ahead of him," said Mr. Meek to himself. He seized a pen, wrote a message upon a telegraph blank, and called John into the counting-room.

"Did you see that man leave the hotel, just now?"

"Yes, sir."

"He has gone to the Junction with a dispatch, and I want you to get ahead of him with this. Drive up towards home slowly, cross the bridge, take the road on the other side of the river, and then go like lightning. Don't stop for hills, or hollows, or any thing. You may kill the horse, but get ahead, and just give this to the operator." Mr. Meek put a five-dollar bill into John's hand. "And there's another for yourself. Tell the operator that it is a cipher dispatch. If you can plan any way to keep the other dispatch from being sent to-night I will give you another five-dollar bill when you get back. You understand?"

"You may bet on me, Mr. Meek," said John, jumping into the light buggy, and driving slowly up the street, as if to show off the gait of the horse.

"A fine animal you have there," said Mr. Ketchum, as he came across the street to Mr. Meek, who was standing in the door.

"Yes, pretty good; and, if you would like, we will take a drive after tea, if John gets back in season."

"Thank you," Mr. Ketchum replied, not knowing that it was a diplomatic speech.

They went into the counting-room.

"I am very much pained at the discovery you have made," said Mr. Meek.

"I am very sorry for you. I feel for you, but I could not shrink from my duty," the detective replied.

"Of course not, Mr. Ketchum, and I cannot thank you enough for the exceeding delicacy with which you have performed it; but isn't there some way of preventing this from being made public?"

"I think not. You know that the law is very severe. I have already sent a telegraph despatch ordering the arrest of your son. The fact is, Mr. Meek, I have been pretty well informed in regard to his doings for several weeks. I have been riding up and down on the coach, and have seen him change the mails; and although I did not see him take any letters, I was well satisfied that he was the guilty party. Perhaps you did not know that I was on the stage this morning, and was very much gratified to find that his trunk was here. I saw John when he brought it down from the chamber, and I heard you yourself say to Peter Smart, that it was not to go. I need not say that it gave me pleasure to see John put it behind the door in the hall."

"I had hoped that there might be some way of compromising the matter," said Mr. Meek.

"Impossible. The law must take its course. Your son will probably be arrested to-night."

"Then there is nothing more to be said?"

"Nothing."

The waiter at the hotel was ringing the bell for tea, and Mr. Ketchum bade Mr. Meek good-evening and left the store.

What a cloud of dust John was leaving behind him! Up hill and down hill, through the hollows, past farm-houses, where the children were running to the window and looking out into the dusk to see who it was that was going like the wind, wondering whether Mr. Meek had a wager with somebody, or whether John was timing the horse,— so he went.

It was half-past seven when John stepped into the telegraph office, and handed Mr. Meek's despatch through the pigeon-hole to the operator.

"I want it to go right away; it is a cipher despatch, — very important," said John.

"It must take its turn. Doubtful if I can get it off to-night; there are several messages ahead of it," the operator replied, looking at his watch.

John tucked something into the operator's vest-pocket, and the operator having caught a glimpse of it, consulted his watch a moment, and then, as if having made up his mind that it was best to strain a point, if need be, to accommodate so good a customer as Mr. Meek, said, "I guess I can get it through."

He sat down to his instrument, gave a few taps, and "click, click, click" came back to him. Then he rattled at the key in a lively manner for a minute.

"Tell Mr. Meek that it is all right," he said.

John, having satisfied himself that it was right, went out to look after his horse.

It wanted five minutes to eight when the man who had started from the hotel drove up to the station. He threw down the reins, and ran into the telegraph office.

John was near by, and had his whip in his hand. He stepped lightly forward, gave the panting horse a cut upon the flank, and the animal, although badly blown, started off at a brisk trot. John looked in through the window, and saw the stranger with his hand in his pocket, feeling for the despatch.

"Your horse is running away, sir!" John shouted.

The stranger did not stop to find the despatch, but darted out into the darkness.

"Whoa! Whoa!" he cried, giving chase.

He caught up with the horse a mile away, but when he came back the telegraph office was closed, the lights extinguished, and the operator was on his way to see an

adorable young lady whom he held in high esteem, and was very happy to find a five-dollar bill lying loose in his vest-pocket, which got there in some mysterious way.

The shock that had come to Caleb unmanned him. He was unfit for work, and waited for the return of his strength before resuming his journey.

With a swelling heart and rising indignation against Mr. Meek, he heard Dan's story of Linda's trials, and received with grateful emotion the sympathy of those whom he honored and respected. But oh, the loneliness, the emptiness, with Linda gone! He listened for her footsteps, though knowing that he never would hear them again. But there was a mystery that neither himself nor Dan nor Bell could fathom. What had become of the letters which Linda had written to him? What had become of those which he had written to her?

He was walking upon the street, and encountered his fellow passenger of the stage.

"Do you find Millbrook a favorable location for the establishment of a shoe manufactory?" Caleb asked.

"I don't think that I shall start one at present," replied Mr. Ketchum, smiling. "By the way," he added, "I have something about me that may interest you," and he handed Caleb a package of letters, — his own and Linda's.

"Where did you get them?" Caleb asked in astonishment.

"Moses Meek tampered with the mails while here. I am not in the shoe business, but agent of the post office, and obtained these from his trunk. They are at your service, — they belong to you."

"Moses Meek a mail robber!"

"Yes, and is in limbo this morning," said Mr. Ketchum as he passed on.

On this point, however, he was mistaken. On that same morning, Moses, having burned the gas through the night in an upper chamber down town, reached his room at the West End. As he entered his room, he saw a yellow envelope on the floor, which had been tucked under the door at eight, P. M. the night before. He tore open the envelope, and read what to the telegraph operator had been a despatch in cipher. Though he had not pre-arranged the cipher with his father, he comprehended it:—

"P. O. got trunk. West Indies, Mexico, or Canada instantly."

He read it a second time. Cold sweat came upon his brow. A few minutes later the marketmen coming into the city, the bakers and milkmen going their rounds in the early gray of the morning, saw a young man with a valise in his hand running toward the railroad station, and said to themselves, "There goes a drummer to catch the early train."

CHAPTER XLI.

BERTHA'S STRANGE WAYS.

AUNT JANET was troubled in mind in regard to Bertha, who not only had refused to be flattered and praised in society, but who was manifesting a disposition to do as she pleased in other things. Soon after Caleb's departure for the woods of Maine, her desire to do strange things manifested itself in a new direction. She became possessed of the idea that there were people in the world who were having a hard time, and that she must hunt them up and lend them a helping hand. Aunt Janet was so concerned for the welfare of Bertha, that she resolved to consult with her friend, Mrs. Codington, and see if some plan could not be devised by which the girl could be made sensible that she was going in the wrong direction. The two ladies were sitting in Mrs. Codington's luxurious drawing-room.

"She is a strange girl," said Aunt Janet. "I wanted her to go to Newport and purchase, or at least hire, a villa, where we could be in the centre of society, but she absolutely refused to go there. She seems to have become infatuated with Nahant, and has purchased a cottage there. Now Nahant is pleasant enough for one who wants to live

in a quiet way, but it is not fashionable. What can have put it into Bertha's head to go there I cannot imagine."

"Bertha might be the belle of the season, if she were so inclined," said Mrs. Codington.

"That is so. She might be a queen in society, but instead of taking the place for which she is fitted by the royalty that Nature has bestowed, and by her wealth, she thinks that she must look after a lot of poor creatures who ought to be able to look after themselves," said Aunt Janet.

"That is very strange. What do you suppose started her in that direction?" asked Mrs. Codington.

"I have not the remotest idea; but since that affair of last spring, when she had such a narrow escape, she has acted in an unaccountable manner. Would you believe it, she started out the other day and rambled all over Negro Hill, went into narrow alleys, and up ricketty stairs, and down into cellar-kitchens, to see some poor people that Peter told her about. Then she went down to the grocer's, and ordered sacks of flour, bags of potatoes, tea, coffee and other things to be sent to them. It was very kind in her, to be sure, but then, that is the City Missionary's business. Of course, we all contribute to help the poor when the plate is passed around on Sunday, but we do not all of us feel called upon to go down into the dirty alleys," said Aunt Janet.

"Of course not," replied Mrs. Codington, and added, "but Bertha, you know, is very sympathetic; besides, she has inherited her father's practical ways. He always looked after every thing, and so does Bertha."

"She is a Wayland, out and out," said Aunt Janet. "What would you do with her?" she asked, after a moment's pause.

"I don't think that I would try to do any thing with her. She has inherited her father's decision of character. She is independent in thought and action, and, if you attempt to influence her unduly, she will be all the more independent. Perhaps she will get tired of doing strange things by-and-by," said the prudent Mrs. Codington.

Aunt Janet accepted the advice, but resolved to always have entertaining company at the dinner-table, and in the drawing-room, and to quietly bring around Bertha such influences that she would forget her strange ways and become a star in society.

November came, with its windy days and chilly nights. Caleb had finished his work in the woods of Maine, and was once more in Boston, invigorated in body and mind. There was the glow of health upon his cheeks. He walked erect with a firm and steady step. He had accomplished the work assigned him to the satisfaction of Mr. Asset, and on a bright starlit evening called at the Wayland mansion, to pay his respects to Bertha and Aunt Janet. Peter opened the door.

"How do you do, Peter?" he said, extending his hand.

"Why, Mr. Krinkle! Is it yourself, sah, or is it somebody else, sah! Why, how fleshy you is, sah. Your cheeks are as plump as pippins, sah, and your face as roun' as de full moon, sah. I'm mighty glad to see you in de 'joyment of such good health, sah. I reckon dat Miss Bertha will be glad to see you, sah. Walk into de parlor, sah. I will tell Miss Bertha that you have come, sah."

Peter bowed low, as he always did to those for whom he had particular respect, and ascended the hall stairs to

notify Miss Bertha, who was in her room, of his arrival. Caleb heard a light tripping of feet, the rustling of a dress upon the stairs, and Bertha stood before him. He felt the warm grasp of her hand, and saw the smiles upon her face. Never before had he seen her so radiant and beautiful.

"What an unexpected pleasure is this! You have taken me by surprise. And are you very well?"

"Quite well, I thank you."

"I need not have asked; I can see that you are by the freshness of your countenance. But sit down, please, and tell me all about yourself — where you have been, and what you have been doing."

It was spoken in a breath — her hand resting in his the while.

"Have you been very well all the time?" she asked, again.

"Very well, I thank you. There is nothing like life in the open air to give one vigorous health."

"And you have been happy, of course?"

Caleb did not at once reply, for the sight of her so radiant and beautiful set him to thinking of Linda. His thoughts went back over the years to that evening when he last saw her — the last time he would ever behold her.

Bertha noticed his hesitation, and her quick eye saw the shade of sadness settling on his face.

"Excuse me," she said quickly. "I did not think, when I spoke, of the great sorrow that has come to you. I have heard about it from Mary Fielding. How sad to think that Linda is gone! I knew that she was your betrothed, and was glad of, it for she was one of the noblest girls that ever lived. I felt like putting my arms around her the first time I saw her. You remember that it was in

your own maple grove. She had such sweetness, composure, and native dignity, that I wanted to clasp her to my heart. Then, at that Thanksgiving party, she endeared herself to me by her kindness and goodness. Tell me about her, please, that I may emulate her virtues."

"I never realized till Linda was gone," said Caleb, "how much there is in the divine apothegm, that the works of the righteous follow them. No one knew till she was no more, how much good she had done. She will long be remembered for her kindness and goodness. Old men who walked with tottering steps, and old women who had lost their eyesight, thought of her as an angel. She read the Bible to them, talked to them of their childhood days, and of the glories of the eternal life — lead them, as it were, to the fountains of perpetual youth, and made them young again," said Caleb.

"And I have done nothing." It was a sigh, a lament, that fell from Bertha's lips, spoken as if in reverie.

"We are not always competent to judge of what we have done," Caleb replied.

"You said that the works of the righteous follow them; does not the apothegm apply to the wicked as well?" Bertha asked.

"Undoubtedly. We all of us live after we are dead. If the evil that we do could only die with us, how much better it would be, not only for ourselves, but for the world! We may catch a thief and shut him up so long as he is in the flesh, but the moment he steps out of it we have no redress. We wicked creatures who live after we are in our graves are the ones the constables cannot catch. Sin and selfishness are so pleasurable, that we never stop to think of what may come from our wrongdoing, after we have dropped out of existence. It is this

going on forever of the evil that we do, that makes life such a responsibility. We dare and do, and the whole universe suffers. Linda understood, as all true souls understand, perhaps not by reason, but by a divine insight, that we live not to ourselves alone."

Their interview was interrupted by the arrival of Major-General Pompon, — a gentleman a little past the prime of life, — a bachelor, holding a Major-General's commission in the army. When he was in full military dress, he wore two stars on each shoulder. He entered the parlor with dignity, bowed in a dignified way to Bertha, and put on a frigid dignity when introduced to Mr. Krinkle. It was barely an inclination of the head, and a look which said, "Who are you, and what are you poaching on my domains for?"

As General Pompon took his seat, Caleb arose to go.

"Please do not go, Mr. Krinkle. I want to talk with you," said Bertha, motioning him to a seat.

General Pompon opened his eyes wide, and stared at Mr. Krinkle, as if saying to himself, "I must have my eyes about me. I must look out for this fellow." He ran his eyes over Caleb from head to foot with military precision, as if examining an enemy in position against whom he must direct his batteries, and knitting his shaggy brows.

"A pleasant evening," Caleb remarked.

"I am glad to see you so hale and hearty," said the General to Bertha, taking no notice of what Caleb had said.

"Thank you, I am quite well, was the response, and then, turning toward Caleb, Bertha said, "How very delightful it must have been for you to ramble in the grand old forest."

"I enjoyed the solitude very much. Bryant's 'Forest Hymn' was ever in my mind: —

'The groves were God's first temple, ere man learned
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,
And spread the roof above them — ere he framed
The lofty vault, to gather and roll back
The sound of anthems.' "

General Pompon fidgeted in his chair, and turned himself to take a good look at this masked battery, and after surveying it, came to the conclusion, that he would presently send some hot shot in that direction.

"Miss Wayland, if it is enjoyment you're after, come with me to the battle-field. There is nothing like a good fight to stir one's blood," and he went on to narrate his exploits, rehearsing them as Othello rehearsed his adventures before Desdemona, —

"Of moving accidents by flood and fields,
Of hair-breadth 'scapes."

Caleb heard him say, —

"The bullets rained about me. They fell like hail upon the grass, as I rode over the field. I charged over the breastworks, turned their left flank, captured nearly half of them, and put the others to rout."

"Was the rest of the army engaged?" Bertha asked.

"Oh, yes, of course, a portion of it, but I assure you I was in the hottest of the fight," the general replied, not seeing the keen sarcasm which Bertha had thrown into the question.

"I dare say," Bertha replied coldly. Caleb thought that she was amused, and yet a little impatient of the egotism and vanity of her visitor.

The bell rang, and soon after, while General Pompon was in the midst of a cavalry charge, Peter announced another visitor, Reverend Mr. Cassock. The Reverend gentleman,

was a young man, dressed in a clerical suit of black, with a pale face smoothly shaven, wearing golden-bowed spectacles, and with his dark-brown hair parted in the middle. He came in bowing and teetering.

"I hope that I see you very well," he said, bowing to Bertha. He made a half bow to General Pompon and another to Caleb.

"General Pompon and my friend Mr. Krinkle," said Bertha, introducing the General and Caleb.

The General gave a slight inclination of his head, pulled his whiskers, and put on a glum look. He did not like to be interrupted at the most thrilling point of his story, nor did he relish the presence of the new comer. More, he noticed that Miss Wayland in introducing Caleb had called him her friend. Reverend Mr. Cassock also noticed it, and said to himself, "Who is he?" He took a shy look, a side glance through his spectacles at the quiet, self-possessed young man sitting by the centre-table.

"The evening was so delightful, and the stars so bright that, really, I could not resist the temptation of stealing down this way and of dropping in upon you a moment, Miss Wayland. I missed you from church last Sunday morning," said Mr. Cassock.

"No; I was not there," Bertha replied.

"I feared you might be sick. Really I was quite concerned."

"I have been very well, I thank you."

"I was quite disappointed when I found you were absent, for I wanted to know what you thought of my sermon."

"I dare say I should have liked it," Bertha replied.

What a peacock! was the thought that flashed through the brain of General Pompon who was chewing his heavy moustache — champing it as a horse his bits, and out of all patience with the Reverend gentleman.

"Miss Wayland, will you not favor me with a little music? Allow me to escort you to the piano," said the General, rising, bowing and extending his arm, ignoring Reverend Mr. Cassock and Mr. Krinkle.

"I will play with pleasure, if it would be agreeable to the company," Bertha said.

"Charming, delightful!" said Mr. Cassock.

"I shall enjoy it very much," was Caleb's reply.

General Pompon stood at her right hand, and Reverend Mr. Cassock immediately took a position at her left, that he might turn the leaves of the music, while Caleb sat quietly by the centre-table. She played a sonata.

"Miss Wayland, your playing is so grand and magnificent that it reminds me of the marching of an army, with all the bands playing and the banners waving above them. I could charge a whole brigade alone under the inspiration of your playing," said the General.

Mr. Cassock clapped his soft hands and said, "You quite enchant me, Miss Wayland, and will you now favor us with a song?"

Bertha sang as requested.

"My dear Miss Wayland, the nightingales will envy you," said Mr. Cassock, bowing and teetering and patting his hands. She had selected a simple ballad, but it was sung with such pathos that a tear rolled down Caleb's cheek before he was aware of it. Bertha saw it. It was not the demonstrative applause of General Pompon nor the sentimental utterances of Reverend Mr. Cassock, but this silent appreciation on the part of Caleb, that won her respect and gratitude.

The evening was waning, and General Pompon and Reverend Mr. Cassock took their departure, disquieted in mind, because Mr. Krinkle was there and because he showed no

signs of leaving, and because Miss Wayland had called him her friend.

"Now tell me all about where you have been and what you have seen," said Bertha, when General Pompon and Reverend Mr. Cassock had taken their departure.

She sat with her arm resting upon the centre-table with the light from the chandelier falling upon her face, and listened with eagerness to his account of what he had done in looking after her interests.

"I found health in the woods, and judge that you also found it at the seashore.

"Yes, indeed, and happiness such as I never enjoyed before, and do you know that I am indebted to you for it? If it had not been for the crossing of our paths, and our visit to the seaside on that day early in the season, I undoubtedly should have been trying to kill time at Saratoga or Newport, but I have not forgotten, nor shall I ever forget, what the sea said to me on that day," Bertha replied.

"What was it, please?"

"That my life was running to waste. That I was of no account, and that the world was no better for my living in it. I never shall forget the thoughts that came to me as I heard the pebbles chafing the beach, — the hollow sound as the waves ran back again into the sea, that so my life was running out, and nothing would ever come of it. Nor shall I ever forget the words that fell from your lips as we sat upon the rocks looking at the ships as they went sailing by. O Mr. Krinkle, they were an evangel to me! They awakened me from my dreaming. Since then I feel that I have begun to live. Till that day I had searched in vain for happiness, but I have been very happy since, and I am indebted to you for pretty much all the real, soul-satisfying pleasure I have had in life thus far.

"You surprise me, Miss Wayland. May I ask in what way I have been of benefit to you?"

"You revealed to me what I never knew before, that the highest happiness in this life comes from helping those who cannot help themselves; that it is the Divine ideal; and so much have I enjoyed in the little that I have attempted to do for others, it seems to me the pleasure must be akin to that experienced by the angels."

Caleb saw the light in her earnest eyes and knew that the friendship between them was closer than ever. The evening was far advanced, and he felt that it was time for him to take his departure. Bertha accompanied him to the door, shook hands with him upon the threshold, and bowed to him as he passed into the street; then she went back into the parlor, sat down in the luxurious arm-chair, and fell into reverie. She thought of the tear that had glistened for a moment on his cheek while she was playing. She could play by the hour for one who had so delicate a sense of the beautiful in music, and not be weary. She liked to play to him because he enjoyed it so much, and because it was a gratification to herself to give pleasure to one so worthy, so noble and good as she conceived Mr. Krinkle to be. And now she remembered that the house was lonely after his departure for the Maine woods. And it was all the more empty when General Pompon and Reverend Mr. Cassock were present. How different the warm grasp of Mr. Krinkle's hand from the touch of Mr. Cassock's flabby fingers! The by-gone years came back to her, — that first meeting in the maple-grove, — that party where she did not intend to be caught in the game of Copenhagen, — and that kiss! After all the years she could feel it on her cheek! And he had saved her life. She could pray that the best of heaven's blessings might rest upon him. And then came the

thoughts: "How soon shall I see him again? Will he call to-morrow evening?" No, that was not probable. But she would know his footsteps when he came; there were no steps in the world like those she had just heard upon the flag-stones as he took his departure.

Such was the reverie.

CHAPTER XLII.

ONLY A ROSE.

REV. MR. CASSOCK, having meditated upon the matter, came to the conclusion that he could be more efficient in the ministry if he had somebody to criticise his sermons. And he thought that a lady would be better than a gentleman. Besides, a lady, if she were Mrs. Cassock, could look after the buttons on his shirts and the holes in his stockings. He finally came to the conclusion that Miss Wayland would be an efficient aid. He was conscious of a higher inspiration and of more exalted ideas whenever she was a listener to his sermons. Nor is it strange that he came to the conclusion that an income of fifty thousand a year would be altogether more comfortable than the salary doled out by his congregation. There was no knowing how much good he could do if he had such an amount of money.

Mr. Cassock was a frequent visitor at the Wayland mansion, and as he sat in the well-furnished parlor, or turned the leaves of the volumes in the library, he thought that the Wayland mansion would make a delightful parsonage. He had dropped in so many times that he was already quite at home there, and he was always so heartily welcomed by Aunt Janet, and treated so respectfully by Miss

Wayland, and invited to stay and take dinner, that he began to feel as if he were a member of the family. It was delightful to sit at such a table, where he was sure of finding entertaining company.

Aunt Janet admired Rev. Mr. Cassock. There might be other ministers as eloquent as he, but take him all in all as preacher, and especially as pastor, there was no one that excelled him in her estimation. And now that she had given up all expectation of bringing about an alliance of the Porgie family with one of the noble families of old England, she was turning over the question, whether, upon the whole, Bertha could do better than to accept Rev. Mr. Cassock. At any rate, Aunt Janet was quite willing that Mr. Cassock should be a frequent visitor at the Wayland mansion.

Mr. Cassock's seat at the dinner-table usually was that which Caleb had occupied, and though he was brilliant and witty, and was ever bowing and smiling, when Bertha contrasted his bits of sentiment with the earnest words spoken by Mr. Krinkle, she thought that Mr. Cassock did not quite fill the chair. If he was eloquent in the pulpit she could not resist the conviction that in the parlor he was sometimes silly.

Mr. Cassock had called so many times, had been received so courteously and entertained so hospitably, that he concluded the time had come to make known to Bertha his sentiments in regard to her. He was fully persuaded in his own mind that she was not only necessary to his happiness and peace of mind, but that she could make his ministry more efficient. He had come to the conclusion, after much meditation, that the Lord had a great work for her to do, in conjunction with him, and was utterly confounded when Bertha informed him that nothing of the

kind had been revealed to her. So dejected was Rev. Mr. Cassock in spirits at her reply that nothing short of a trip to Europe could make him himself again.

No better success attended General Pompon. He could charge an enemy's battery, but could not find his way to the heart of Bertha Wayland, who, from day to day, was finding happiness in the narrow lanes, alleys and courts of the North End, such as she never had found at Saratoga, Newport and Washington.

Meanwhile, as the months rolled on, Caleb was attaining that for which he had struggled — admittance to the bar. If he felt an exhilaration of spirits, if he walked the streets with a firmer step, conscious of the dignity conferred upon him, he was at the same time not insensible to the fact, that the uphill of life was before him. He had attended lectures at the law school, had bent over the dry-as-dust volumes till long past the midnight hour, unravelling knotty questions. Success was a duty — duty alone — not pleasure. He was no longer animated by a great hope. There was no bright star leading him on. The star that had led him in the past, had gone down never to rise again. Nevertheless, life was before him, and he must do what he could for himself and his fellowmen. Sometimes, when he was down-hearted, and the future a cheerless blank, he found comfort and a stimulus to his resolution by going down to the North End, and climbing a creaking stairway to an attic chamber to see an old man who had lost both legs, who had followed wife and children one by one to the grave, and was alone in the world, yet managed to keep soul and body together by mending old boots. Although the chamber was small and mean, although the old man could gain little, if any thing, ahead of his daily wants, Caleb thought it one of the pleasantest rooms in the

world. The cobbler never grumbled at his lot in life, and was so cheery and ready to help the other poor creatures in the court, who were having a harder time than himself, that Caleb felt ashamed of having the blues. It did him good to leave something with the cobbler to make him more comfortable. He was slow in learning it, but gradually he came to understand that in helping others he was at the same time helping himself. He reproached himself for being down-hearted. Why should he be, — especially with so many kind friends around him? Did not Mr. Asset find work for him? Was he not getting on in his profession? Had he not made a successful plea at the bar? More than this, was not Bertha, though so far above him in social position, a true friend? Was he not occasionally receiving invitations to dine at the Wayland mansion? Was not her treatment of him exceedingly kind and courteous — almost sisterly? How cordial her greeting! how bright her smile whenever he met her! And she had loved Linda.

In an hour of reverie there came the thought — Would Bertha take the place of Linda? The question was decided on the instant — it was not possible. She was noble and good, and worthy of his love; she was beautiful, but she was so far removed from him by her position in life that the thought could not for a moment be entertained. She was his sincere friend, and he would not jeopardize their friendship by thinking that she could ever hold a more endearing relation. Besides, there was a face that haunted him. The years might come and go, but that parting with Linda never would be forgotten; and if he should ever love another it would not be the old love — that was abiding, changeless and sacred.

He banished the thought that had flashed upon him, and went on with his work.

There came a day when Mr. Asset called upon Caleb.

"Hard at work, I see," said Mr. Asset, as he entered the office.

"I am trying to do something," Caleb replied, shaking hands with him and handing him a chair.

"I am glad to know that you have made a successful start, and that you are getting on so well."

Caleb bowed his acknowledgment.

"I have called round to see if I can secure your services, Mr. Krinkle. I have got to send somebody out West to look after Miss Wayland's affairs. Mr. Wayland, just before his death, invested largely in government lands in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota, and they need looking after. I have been counseling with Miss Bertha about it, and she agrees with me that some one ought to go out, and especially as so many of the western lumbermen are in the habit of cutting timber wherever they find it. She is not quite willing that I should ask you to leave your profession, now that you have started so successfully and have such a fair prospect before you, and says you cannot afford to make the sacrifice. I have ventured, however, to come and lay the matter before you. I should prefer to have you go rather than any one else, for you are already somewhat acquainted with her affairs, and I know that what you undertake will be accomplished. I have not come to urge you to go, but if you can see your way clear, I will make the compensation satisfactory," said Mr. Asset.

"I will go. I will do any thing in my power to serve Miss Wayland who has done so much for me," Caleb replied, without a moment's hesitation. "I can turn over my business to a friend," he added, "and will trust to the Providence which has led me thus far, to recover it when I return."

"Thank you. If you will drop in to-morrow I will unfold

the business to you. It will be an all-summer trip, and you must prepare to encounter some hardships. You will be beyond civilization most of the time," said Mr. Asset.

"That does not deter me; I shall like it all the better. There is health in the woods and on the prairies," Caleb replied, as Mr. Asset bowed himself out of the room.

A few days later, Caleb's preparations were completed, his trunk packed, his instructions received. On a pleasant evening in May, he proceeded toward the Wayland mansion to bid Bertha and Aunt Janet good-by. As he turned around Park Street Church he saw a little girl leaning against one of the stone posts with flowers for sale. She smiled as she recognized him.

"Ah! Dora, how do you do?"

"Pretty well, I thank you."

"How are you getting on?"

"I have sold all but this."

"Then I will buy you out," Caleb replied, purchasing the last rose she had for sale.

"Thank you. I will pin it to your coat," said the child.

The girl was one of his proteges. He had found her in a miserable garret at the North End, had been won by her sweet face, and had set her up in business by purchasing a few flowers for her to re-sell. The original capital invested was only fifty cents, but out of it had come a deposit in the savings-bank, to say nothing of new shoes, new clothes, a clean face, a thankful heart, comfort, self-respect, longing, aspiration, and hope. It was not the rose which the child pinned to his coat that gave Caleb pleasure, but the thought that he had helped her. And it was not the money which Caleb slipped into Dora's hand that made her happy, but the thought that she had such a friend in the world.

"Good-by, Dora! I am going away in the morning, to be gone through the summer."

"All summer!" A shadow fell upon the child's face.

"Yes; but I shall think of you while I am gone as standing here and selling roses. I shall think of you as doing good to your mother and everybody else. When I come back I will come and see you." He stooped and kissed the child, and saw a tear in her eye, and knew that it was her benediction.

He passed on, reached the Wayland mansion, and rang the bell. Peter opened the door.

"Good-evening, Mr. Krinkle! It is like having the sun rise at midnight to see you, sah. I should ascertain that you is hearty and well, sah."

"Thank you, Peter, but I am greatly indebted to you; if it had not been for your good care of me I should not now be in the enjoyment of such excellent health."

"Thank you, sah. I hope I don't irrigate to myself no more than what is proper, sah, De good Lord was pleased to bless my nussin of ye, sah."

Bertha was in the parlor. She had heard Caleb's footsteps on the pavement. There were no others in the world like his. All Boston might go tramping by her window and there would be no step like those that were crossing her threshold at the moment. She welcomed him with a smile and a warm grasp of the hand.

"I am glad that you could find time to come and spend your last evening with me; there are many things that I want to talk about," she said, and, sitting down by his side, unfolded her plans, or rather the thoughts, that had come to her in regard to the best way of doing good. It having been noised abroad that Miss Wayland was charitably disposed, beggars of every description were swarming around her, not only the

poor creatures who were thankful for crusts from her table, but oily men and voluble women, who had all sorts of schemes in view, by which a portion of her charity, a percentage, or the whole, might drop into their hands and stay there. How to protect herself from those who solicited aid from selfish motives, and how best to render aid where it was needed, occupied their attention till late in the evening.

Aunt Janet had urged Bertha to spend another season at Saratoga and Newport, but Bertha had set her face against the proposition. She would not go where her time would be wholly absorbed in dressing, dancing, compliment, and the exactions of society. In the cottage that had been purchased at Nahant she would receive her friends, and be mistress of herself and not the slave of fashion.

The clock on Park Street Church had struck the hour of ten, and it was time for Caleb to bid her good-night.

"I must be going," he said, "but will you not sing me one song before I say good-by? It will be many months before I shall hear your voice again."

"With pleasure. What shall I sing?"

"Some simple melody that comes from the heart and goes to the heart."

She seated herself at the piano, sat in silence a moment, as if trying to recall a song, ran her fingers over the keys, and began to sing: —

"Oft as I walk the crowded street
Throughout the livelong day,
Amid the ceaseless tramp of feet,
I ever hear your true heart beat,
Although so far away.

"As roving ships return from sea
And anchor by the shore,
So will I hasten soon to thee,

And blissful then, my love, shall be
Our lives forevermore."

Caleb listened in amazement.

"Pardon me, but may I ask where you obtained those words," he said, as she finished the next stanza?

"They were written by a friend of mine. Can you guess who?" Bertha replied, smiling, and enjoying his perplexity; then added, "Perhaps you do not know that ever since my school-days at Hilltown, I have kept up my correspondence with Mary Fielding. Our friendship has never ceased. Perhaps you do not know that there is a sort of Freemasonry among us girls. Our society has no password or sign, except such as always exist between congenial spirits. Linda, Mary and myself, were members of a society which consisted of us three only. So you will not think it strange that the tender lines written by yourself to Linda should have found their way round to me. It was not a betrayal of secrets on the part of Linda, or Mary, but rather a participation on our part in her happiness. I knew, long before the accident which brought about a renewal of my acquaintance with you, of the love that had sprung up between yourself and Linda, and rejoiced that the dear girl had found one who would be true to her forever."

What could he say in reply to such an artless expression of her faith in him? Nothing but this: —

"I thank you for setting the simple words to such a beautiful melody."

He rose to go.

"Must you go? There are many things that I want to say. I cannot recall them now, but shall think of them after you are gone. Will you be gone long, do you think?"

"Mr. Asset thinks that I shall find enough business to

keep me employed till September, and perhaps even longer."

"So long! You will write to me, will you not? I shall want to know how you are."

"Certainly, and with pleasure."

"If you are to be gone so long, may I not ask you to leave me your photograph? I shall forget how you look."

"It would give me pleasure to grant your request, but I haven't one."

"I am sorry. Just think, I have not a single keepsake to remind me of you!"

Her eyes fell upon the rose in the button-hole of his coat.

"With your permission I will take this," she said.

He placed it in her hand. Their eyes met.

"Thank you," she said, pinning it to her dress, with a flush overspreading her face.

Shall we wonder that her voice was tremulous?

There are times when sudden revelations come to us. As a traveller, gaining a mountain's height, unexpectedly beholds a fair and restful valley reposing at his feet, so was the vision that came to Caleb at the moment. From month to month Bertha's friendship had been growing more trustful and confiding; but now he saw and understood why it was that with her trust and confidence there had been an increasing timidity and shyness, and a brighter flush upon her cheeks whenever there was a chance meeting of their eyes. Their friendship was deep and abiding, but now had come the revelation that in the future the tie between them might be even more tender than that of friendship.

"Good-by!" How could he drop the hand that rested so willingly in his? How turn away from one before whose transcendent beauty he could bow down as worshippers bend before the Sistine Madonna, and not recognize by

some little act, her regard for him? Yet he was not prepared to say, "Will you be to me what Linda was?"

"You may be sure that I never shall forget one who has been a true friend to me," he said, and lightly pressed her hand.

She did not withdraw it, but still allowing it to rest there, walked with him to the door. He saw a glad light in her eyes and a growing brightness on her face.

"Good-by! God bless and keep you," she said.

And so, with Bertha's benediction resting upon him, he left the mansion.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE KINDNESS OF THE RIVER TO MR. PICKET.

DAN was travelling through the towns along the river, below Millbrook. It was a region that he did not often visit, for the roads were sandy, which made it hard for his horse — not the animal blind of one eye, with spavins and ring-bones on his legs, whose bones the crows had picked, after dying a natural death, — but a sleek creature that understood every intonation of Dan's voice, and that would put to all his strength whenever Dan said the word. But Dan knew a sandy road called for a putting to without any letting up, and for that reason he usually gave the go-by to a family that lived on the bank of the river, in an out-of-the-way place, reached by a lane leading from the highway.

It was a September afternoon; the sun was shining brightly, and the crickets were making the air melodious with their chirping. The withered leaves, already fallen, were lying in windrows along the path; his horse trampled them beneath his feet, and the wheels of his cart rolled over them with a muffled sound. "So over our dead hopes roll the wheels of time," was the thought that came to him, and the association led him into a reverie upon the past. How different life had been from what he had

anticipated! If different to him, so probably to everybody else. He thought of the changes that had come to Caleb. "After all, it might be just what was needed, to make a man of Caleb. Those who make their manhood know what it is worth. As honey-dew falls upon a pear tree, withering the leaves and blasting the fruit, so riches sometimes bring a blight to characters," said Dan to himself. "What a come-about of events there has been! Mr. Meek, owner of Caleb's old home, rich, divorced from his wife, his only son a fugitive from justice — wandering no one knows where! What has Mr. Meek to put into the scale against his money? Nothing. He has lost character by his sharp dealing; happiness has fled from his home, and there he is, sitting in his den of a counting-room, with the spiders above him, devouring flies, just as he has devoured widows and picked men's bones, whenever he could get a chance."

Being lost in reverie, Dan did not see a bare-footed boy, without coat or vest, with his flaxen hair showing itself through a hole in the crown of his palm-leaf hat, who was running up a sandy lane from the small house that stood on the bank of the river. The horse saw the boy and stopped, and the stopping aroused Dan from his day-dreams.

"Well, Johnny, how do you do?" said Dan, addressing the boy.

"I am pretty well, but my name ain't Johnny."

"Oh, it ain't Johnny! Well, then, I guess it is Sammy."

"No, 'tain't."

"Then I'll give up."

"It's Tim; and mother wants you to come down to the house. She wants ever so many pans, dippers and skimmers, and has got a big pile of rags. She is getting Huldah's fixing-out."

"Oh, ho! that is it. So Huldah is going to get married, is she? Good for her. I'll drive right down. Jump up here, Tim; it is just as easy to ride, as to go afoot."

The boy climbed upon the seat, and Dan turned into the lane. He knew that Mr. Picket lived in the small house at the bottom of the lane on the bank of the river, but he never had visited it, — the road was so sandy, and the house so far away. Mr. Picket had a small farm, and managed by working a part of the time for his neighbors, to get a comfortable living. The river supplied him with fuel. A ledge that projected into the stream just above the house, deflected a portion of the current from its direct course, and brought it into an eddy, and the farmer, sitting in his doorway smoking his pipe, could see by the timber floating there, that a portion of the current was running up stream. The drift-wood whirled in the eddy by the hour together, and even days, or else lodged against the bank for the benefit of the farmer.

Mr. Picket and his wife, and Huldah — the latter a girl of twenty, were before the door to welcome Dan.

"I am much obliged to you," said Mrs. Picket, "for coming in. There ha'n't been a tin-peddler in here, I don't know when, and my tin is all worn out. The milk-pans are as full of holes as a sieve; the coffee-pot has given out, and there is a big leak in the bottom of the milk-pail; I've puttied it up with dough, and stuck a bit of rag into it, but in spite of all I've done, it leaks as bad as ever. I've a grist of rags for you."

"I am glad to hear it," said Dan. "Tim has told me all about it, — that Huldah wants to get her fixings-out. Oh, you needn't blush, Huldah, there ain't nothing to be ashamed of in getting married. I reckon I've sold about five hundred fixings-out. I always give the best, double-refined,

extra thick tin, rolled out by a patent back-action roller, and the girls are always so well satisfied that they want me to come and see them in their new homes. They most generally give me a slice of the wedding-cake. Now just pick out what you want ; rummage your garret, bring out your rags, old books, pamphlets, any thing and every thing that can be ground up into something new."

While Mrs. Picket and Huldah were selecting the articles they wanted, Dan sat down on the grass to have a talk with the farmer.

"The river is very kind to you. I see it brings your firewood to your door," said Dan.

"Yes. If it wa'n't for the river to help me, I should have hard work to get ahead much, the soil is so poor. Sometimes I think I will pull up stakes and go West, but I've lived here so long, that I can't quite make up my mind to do it," Mr. Picket replied.

"The river brings you some lumber now and then, as well as firewood, I suppose," said Dan, looking at a pile of boards and another of shingles that evidently had been in the water.

"Oh, yes ; I've picked up shingles enough already to shingle my barn, and boards and lumber enough to build a shed, to say nothing of fence rails and other things. Upon the whole, the river is a pretty good friend. Sometimes when we have a freshet in the fall, I get a few cart-loads of pumpkins, besides apples and shocks of corn that come floating into the eddy."

"Of course what is your gain is somebody's else loss."

"Yes, and that is the worst of it. I don't enjoy what I pick up half so well as I should if I didn't know that somebody was the poorer by reason of the freshet. We had a tremendous flood six years ago last spring, that

covered all the interval with lumber, drift-wood, parts of bridges and houses, and I don't know what. I picked up a chest of drawers, and a trunk filled with clothing for women and children; there was a heap of letters and papers in it, that Huldah put into the rag-bag, to get her fixing-out with. I found quite a good coat hanging on the bushes, after the water subsided. There were some papers in the pocket, but they were so water-soaked and covered with mud that I couldn't make out who it belonged to."

"If the river was kind to you, it was very unkind to us at Millbrook. It swept away our best citizen."

"Oh, yes, — Captain Krinkle. I remember of hearing about it, and the lumber that came floating into the eddy belonged in good part to him."

Dan narrated the thrilling scene at the bridge, the heroic and vicarious death of Captain Krinkle, and the events that had grown out of it.

Mrs. Picket and Huldah, having selected the ware, brought out the rags which Huldah had been saving ever since she entered her teens, and Dan stopped to weigh them. He made Tim happy by giving him a harmonicon, and then, wishing Huldah a great deal of happiness with the young farmer whom she was going to marry, went on his way up the sandy lane.

A week passed. Dan had sold out his wares and was approaching Millbrook. He had returned by the river road, and must cross the bridge, — the new one, — and he never crossed it now without recalling the terrible scene. There are times with most of us when a thought, like a flash of lightning, startles us with its vividness. It may come seemingly without reason, like a meteor streaming through an unclouded sky at noonday. Such a thought

came to Dan. So vivid was it that he stopped his horse suddenly to think of it.

"Jerusalem! Jingo! If it should happen to be so!" he said to himself.

It was the thunder after the lightning. He started on again, but was in a brown study all the way from the bridge to his home.

CHAPTER XLIV.

MOSES PLAYS A GAME AND LOSES IT.

IT was an autumnal evening. The light of day had faded from the sky, and darkness was settling over the swamps and bayous of the Mississippi river. The steamboat *Queen of the West* was lying at the Memphis landing ready for an up-river trip. Passengers were hurrying on board with carpet-bags and valises in their hands and with babies in their arms. Husbands were calling to their wives and daughters to hurry up or they would be left, and wives were shouting to their dilatory husbands to make haste, before the plank was drawn in. Stalwart negroes were rolling barrels of whiskey, hogsheads of tobacco, boxes, bales and bundles on board; the fires were blazing beneath the boilers; two black columns of smoke were rolling out from the chimneys, and there was a hissing of escaping steam. The bell was tolling, the mate was swearing at the negro crew, the negroes were swearing at one another, and over the scene of confusion the pitch-wood fire in the iron jack at the bow of the boat cast its lurid light.

A young man with a carpet-bag in his hand came leisurely down the levee, made his way through the crowd, walked on board the *Queen of the West*, and ascended the

gangway to the cabin. He had the bearing of a man who always had his thoughts about him. It was the engineer in-chief of the great Southwestern Railway, — Mr. Job Titicut.

He was a young man to occupy so high a position, but the boy who found more pleasure in demonstrating the theorem, that the square root of the squares of the base and perpendicular is equal to the hypothenuse, than in eating his dinner, was in a fair way to be somebody. Mr. Titicut was making his way in the world. If he said but little, he had time to think the more. Mr. Titicut secured his state-room, and ascended to the hurricane-deck, seated himself in a chair, and watched the scene below.

The last passenger, the last barrel, the last negro, were on board. There was the tinkle of a bell down below, a slow turning of the wheels, a splashing of water, a puff of steam on the larboard side, another on the starboard, a drawing in of the plank, a casting off of cables, several oaths from the captain, and a whole string from the mate. The boat, being heavily loaded at the bow, was resting in the soft mud and did not move.

There was a louder tinkling of the bell below, and a volley of oaths went down through the tin tube leading from the pilot's house to the engine-room, with the inquiry, "What are you about down there?"

The negroes by the furnaces thereupon stirred up the fires, and the smoke rolling out from the chimneys became thicker and blacker.

"Roll those bar'ls aft, and be lively about it," said the mate, kicking the negroes, while the negroes kicked each other and unwound a long line of oaths as they rolled the barrels of whiskey to the stern.

"Puff!" from the port engine.

"Puff — puff!" from the starboard.

"Tinkle — tinkle — tinkle!" from the bell.

"Plash — plash — plash!" from the wheels.

There is a rattling of the rudder-ropes, a swinging and swaying of the boat, a swashing of the water, an infernal screech of the whistle over Mr. Titicut's head — heard all along the levee, and all over Memphis, and dying away in echoes among the woods. So the *Queen of the West* takes her departure.

Mr. Titicut sat upon the hurricane-deck. His thoughts were now in New Hampshire, and now in Arkansas and Texas, and reaching on over the arid plains across the Rio Grande, across the Sierras, to the Pacific. He could see a sweet and lovely girl in New Hampshire — Mary Fielding — teaching school, making butter, studying French, making her own dresses, playing the piano, cutting out a pair of pantaloons for her father, reading German, baking bread, writing an article for a magazine, and doing the washing for the family; then turning his thoughts westward, he could see tangents, curves, bridges, viaducts and tressels. He carried a map in his brains. He could see the geographical and the topographical features of the country, — the rivers, plains, mountains; the elevations and depressions; the waterless and the treeless regions, the places where they would have to dig wells, where they could have aqueducts, where they could get ties, where they could obtain wood, where they might possibly find coal, where the grade would be fifty feet and where eighty feet to the mile, where there must be reversed curves, and where he could get a long tangent. And not only these, but he could see the relations of this Great Transcontinental Railway to the railway system of the country, what would feed it, what it would feed, and what relations it would have not only to the Atlantic slope

and the valley of the Mississippi on the one hand and the Pacific on the other, but to Europe eastward, and the Orient westward. Sitting there with the soft summer air fanning his cheeks, as the *Queen of the West* moved up the river in majesty and might, he took out the great map, as it were, from the several draws in which he kept it in his cranium, opened all its folds, saw it in all its parts, and studied the great unknown but certain future.

Other passengers were on the deck, smoking cigars, Planters were talking about the prospects of cotton. A young couple who had passed from a church in Memphis to the steamer with the minister's blessing resting on them, were looking at the new moon in the west, and saying to themselves, "If the first hour of married life is so ecstatic, what must it be to have, as we expect, a half a century of connubial love?"

There were roystering fellows, wearing broad-brimmed felt hats, snuff-colored corduroy pantaloons, bed-tick vests and gray coats. They had long black hair, sallow countenances, sunken eyes, and expressionless faces, and were chewing rank tobacco. There were women, tall, lean, lantern-jawed, wearing coarse kersey dresses They passed the evening away by chewing a stick, and dipping the broomed end in a tin dipper filled with snuff, then rubbing it into their gums. At times they smoked corn-cob pipes. They sat for the most part in silence.

Moving here and there about the boat—now in the saloon, and now on the upper deck—was a young man with a smoothly-shaven face, wearing a white necktie and a suit of black.

"A young minister," said Mr. Titicut to himself.

Who was this young clergyman? Job thought he had seen him before. He thought over all the young ministers

of his acquaintance, all the students he had known in college, but though he could see the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific, though he could locate a trans-continental railroad, he could not locate the man before him. The associations connected with him were like a half-remembered dream — so unsubstantial that he could not grasp them.

The minister descended to the cabin, and one by one the passengers went below to their state-rooms, leaving Mr. Titicut studying the great map, invisible to all but himself. It was nearly midnight when he folded it up and laid it away in one corner of his brain. Then he descended the stairs to the saloon where a party were playing cards. They were seated around a table, absorbed in the game. All the lights in the saloon had been extinguished or turned down, excepting those in the chandelier above them. The glass shades were tinkling to the plashing of the wheel and the steady clank — clank — clank of the engines. He saw that they were playing poker.

On one side of the table sat a tall, athletic, dark-featured man, with heavy eyebrows and long black hair. He wore a plaid vest and a scarlet necktie and had a showy watch-chain. Job had been long enough in that section of the country and was observant enough of men to see at a glance that he was a man to be avoided. He also wore a belt around his waist and took no pains to conceal the revolver and knife attached to it. Although he did not speak, there was that in his bronzed face and in his every action which said, "I am not to be trifled with." It was so plainly written in all his features that every looker-on comprehended it, and the desperado knew that they so understood him.

One by one the players dropped off from the game, hav-

ing lost their money, or else the stakes were beyond their means, but there was one young man with sandy hair, sitting with his back to Job, who, though he had seen a large portion of his money slip out of his own hands into the hands of the desperado, seemed to be disposed to continue the game. Those who had ceased playing, and those who had not played at all, drew their chairs around the table to watch the result.

The young minister, as if wanting to see how it would come out, and yet not quite ready to countenance it by drawing his chair up to the table, took a seat behind the desperado and tipped back against the ceiling. As if further to show that the game had no great attraction for him, he lighted a cigar, and, half closing his eyes, commenced smoking.

Who was he? Job scanned his features in vain. He had seen him somewhere, but the *some* would not settle down into any particular *where.* Silence. The plashing of the wheels, the clank of the engine, the tinkling of the glass globes above them, the trembling of the boat, the throwing down of the cards, and the passing of money from one to the other, these were the only sounds breaking the stillness.

Job found himself getting interested in the game. The red-haired young man had been losing, but now luck seemed to be turning in his favor. Thus far Job had seen only the back of his head and his red whiskers, but he could see that he was playing cautiously, and had his wits about him.

The player turned his head.

"I have seen that face before," said Job, to himself, but where?" He would like to know. He rose from his seat, walked down the cabin, came back and stood where he

could scan the features of the player, and saw Moses Meek! Six years had passed away since Job last saw him, but that was his old schoolmate. That retreating forehead, those light eyebrows, those red eyes, belonged to nobody but Moses. He was smoothly shaven, his cheeks were florid, his countenance fresh and fair when Job last saw him, but now his beard was full and long, and hung in a mass upon his breast. His countenance was sallow, the skin had lost its freshness and bore unmistakable marks of dissipation, as if he had drunk the cup of sensual pleasure to the dregs.

Job took a seat at a little distance, where he could watch the changes upon the countenance of each of the players. The desperado ordered one of the negro waiters to bring him a tumbler of whiskey, of which he took now and then a swallow. The spirit soon showed itself in his flashing eyes, and under the excitement of the game there was a nervous twitching of the muscles of the face, and a setting of the teeth more firmly together as he tossed the amounts lost, over to Moses, who now and then raised his eyes for a moment and glanced at the man. There was a malignant smile on Moses' face — of triumph and revenge. It was a look which said, "I am paying off old scores. You fleeced me awhile ago, and I swore I would be even with you, and I am going to be. I let you win the first part of the evening, but now the tide is turned, and the game is in my hands. I have got the cards that will win, and I am going to clean you out." No words — only the smile. There was a challenge in it, which, if declined, would brand the other as a coward, and the desperado was not a man to decline a challenge of that sort, even if he were to rise penniless from the table. The smile was more than whiskey to inflame Moses' antagonist.

There was a knitting of his brows and a slight trembling of his fingers as he shuffled the cards.

No whisper now from the lookers-on, but a silence so deep that had it not been for the plashing of the wheels, the tinkling of the globes, and the jar of the boat, they might have heard the beating of their hearts. The clergyman had smoked out his cigar, and lighted another. "An inveterate smoker for a clergyman," said Job to himself. He, of all the lookers-on, seemed to take no particular interest in the game. For a moment he opened his eyes and looked at the gamblers; then half closed them as before. "Where have I seen that fellow? Who is he? What a curious way he has of smoking, — sending out quick puffs, taking his cigar from his mouth, putting it quickly in again, giving several puffs in quick succession! There is a method in it; it is not habit, but method, — studied method. I see. He is telegraphing to Moses. He sees the hand of the desperado." Out of the dim haze of the past there came a stripling wearing a purple velveteen coat, tipping from a sled at Caleb's sugaring-off party, and sliding down hill on his back, — Mr. Flipkin!

"What is the meaning of the method in his smoking?" Job notices that Moses, while intently watching every movement of his antagonist in the game, now and then lifts his eyes for an instant toward Mr. Flipkin.

"Shall I expose the trick?" Job comprehends it all. Flipkin, sitting where he can catch now and then a glimpse of the cards in the hands of the desperado, is telegraphing his information to Moses in puffs from his cigar.

The desperado is perplexed. At the beginning of the game fortune favored him, but now he seems to have lost his skill. The stakes are high. He is excited. He looks at his cards, but hesitates to show his hand. Drops of

sweat stand upon his forehead. There is a twitching of the muscles of his face. The malignant smile is still resting on Moses' countenance, and in his bleared eyes there is a look of triumph. The desperado sees it, and he knows that the spectators are waiting in breathless silence to see if he will have the nerve to lay with composure upon the table the cards which will either make him penniless or else put a magnificent sum into his purse. He sets his teeth firmly together and lays down the cards. The die is cast. With a low chuckle Moses shows his hand. The desperado springs to his feet, looks around, and gazes at Flipkin. Like a gleam of lightning a thought has flashed upon him. He seizes the money with one hand and with the other draws his revolver.

"A spy! eh? You wolf in sheep's clothing, I'll let daylight through you!" he shouts with an oath; but before he can raise his pistol, Flipkin dodges behind the spectators into a state-room, through it, runs out upon the guards of the boat, down the gangway, and secretes himself among the bales of cotton piled below.

"Hand over!" said Moses, grasping at the money with one hand and giving the desperado a blow in the face with the other.

A flash, a puff of smoke, men running in every direction, tumbling over chairs, hiding under tables, darting into state-rooms. A shriek, a groan, a heavy fall like a log of wood.

The spectators are gone,—all but one. Job Titicut stands there self-possessed amid the affray. He stoops to lift the head of his old friend. "Do you know me, Moses?" A gurgling in the throat, a convulsive movement of the lip, a glazing of the eye, and all is over. Shot through the heart. Gone!

"*Gone — gone — gone!*" It was the steamer's bell that said it. The boat was approaching a landing, and it was but the signal, but at that midnight hour it was Moses' knell. Over the swirling waters it floated and died in the distance.

The captain came and looked at the lifeless form. "We may as well put the body off here as anywhere else," he said.

"I will stop and see that he has a decent burial," said Job.

"Just as you please, sir. The folks on shore, I dare say, will dig a hole and put him into it, if you don't care to stop."

The plank was run out. The negroes on the deck, who had been asleep, were roused from their slumbers by the oaths of the mate. The pitch-wood fire kindled in the jack sent its lurid light shoreward upon a muddy bank, revealing in the darkness two or three dilapidated houses, and along the shore, cottonwoods, gum trees and oak, with thick branches of mistletoe overhead. Riverward it threw its light only upon the mighty stream rolling ever to the sea. A box, a bundle, a barrel of bacon and several barrels of whiskey were put upon the landing, and then the negroes took up the limp and lifeless form, carried it across the plank, and laid it upon the ground.

The murderer, with his carpet-bag in one hand, revolver in the other, and the ill-gotten gains in his pocket, walked leisurely over the plank, up the bank, and disappeared in the darkness. The bell tolled once more, there was a plashing of the wheels, and the boat moved away, leaving Job upon the bank watching the dead.

A rude coffin, a lonely grave. No funeral train, one mourner only bending above him. Such was the burial. Life's game had been played and the stakes lost forever.

CHAPTER XLV.

MRS. PICKET'S RAG-BAG.

DAN was sorting the rags he had purchased of Mrs. Picket. He came upon a scrap of paper that bore evidence of having been in the water. It was dingy and stained with mud. He unfolded it, and read the few lines that were upon it. He opened his eyes wide, drew in his breath, and gave a long, low whistle.

"Jerusalem! Jingo! Jewhilikins," he exclaimed, slapping his thigh with his hand. He read the lines a second time, and opened his eyes still wider.

"Ah—h!"

It was a long-drawn exclamation. A train of associations was beginning to unwind. He could see something that he had never seen before. Dim shadows were taking form and substance.

"That beats me. Who would have thought it! Perhaps there is something more, who knows?"

As a dog digging at the burrow of the fox scents his prey, so Dan, with eager fingers and straining eyes, overhauled the rags before him. He came upon a mass of water-soaked letters; the writing was faded, the sheets blurred, and dark with the silt that had been washed upon them while afloat in the river, but, by turning them to the

light, he could make out the writing. He knew the hand that wrote them.

"Oh, ho—o! Jerusalem! Jingo! Jewhilikins!" Sunshine was taking the place of fog.

"That explains it all. Why didn't I ever think of it before?" he said to himself, as he gazed upon the dingy paper.

Through the day he remained in a deep study. So absorbed was he in thinking, that his mother noticed it.

"What are you thinking of, Dan?" she asked.

"Lots of things, mother; I'll tell you some time."

It was a great secret that he was carrying around with him, — so great that he could think of nothing else. So tremendous was it that it made him grit his teeth, and resolve in his own mind to stand up with all the manhood that God had given him for justice and right.

Mr. Meek was sitting in his counting-room. The lines upon his face were deepening, they were lines of care and weariness and disappointment. With all his politeness, he was sensitive to public criticism. His neighbors and townsmen who had suffered through him, who had put their money into the Catawampus Oil Company only to find that it had passed into his pocket, were becoming more and more vehement in their denunciation of his rascality. There was no way in which they could take hold of him by law, but they would let every body else know he was a swindler.

Dan made his appearance at the door of the counting-room.

"Good-morning, Dan! How do you do?"

"Pretty well. Are you busy just now, Mr. Meek?"

"Oh, no; I have nothing particular on hand. What can I do for you?"

"I wanted to talk with you a minute or two on a matter between ourselves, and as I don't care to have the clerks hear, I'll shut the door, if you please."

"All right; do so." Mr. Meek did not make his accustomed bow. He had sharp eyes, and saw that Dan had something important on his mind.

"It is between six and seven years, I believe, since you bought the Krinkle farm, isn't it?" said Dan, taking a chair.

"Yes, I believe so."

"I have most forgotten how much you paid for it?"

"It was the amount of the note and the interest, about eleven thousand dollars."

"It was appraised at about fifteen thousand, I believe."

"Yes, but there was nobody that wanted it. I didn't want it, but had to take it for the amount of my claim against the estate. That Krinkle business was a bad affair all round," said Mr. Meek, wondering what Dan was driving at.

"Just the way I look at it. By the way, you don't want to sell the farm, do you?" Dan asked.

Mr. Meek sniffed a customer somewhere. Dan was feeling of him for somebody else.

"Well, — no, — I don't know as I do. Yet if anybody wants the farm, and is willing to pay what it is worth, I will dispose of it."

"What do you hold it at?"

"Who is it wants to buy?"

"Oh, no matter about that. One customer is as good another, if the pay is all right."

"The appraisers, of course, did not put the full value on the property; they knew that it would not fetch its full value at auction by several thousand dollars. They set it

at fifteen thousand, but I suppose it was worth that very day, not less than twenty thousand, and perhaps more. But if you will bring me a cash customer, Dan, I will sell for twenty. If it is to be on time, I shall want twenty-one."

"And you got it for eleven. I remember the auctioneer said that you got it for about half what it was worth."

"But I didn't want it. Really, I couldn't afford to have it, for it took so much quick capital right out of my business."

"And you won't sell for less than twenty thousand?"

"Not a mill, and not for that, unless it is cash."

"I think that we can make it cash, or what will be equivalent to it; but don't you think that rather an extravagant price? You have not kept the buildings in repair, they need painting; you have sold hay instead of feeding it out, and the farm is not in so good condition as it was," said Dan.

"But real estate has risen. It is worth twenty thousand cash down, if it is worth a cent," Mr. Meek replied.

"And you got it for eleven!"

"Well, if circumstances favored my making a good trade, — if I was forced to take property I did not want, — that was my luck."

Dan took a slip of paper from his wallet.

"I have a little piece of paper here, which I should like to read to you, Mr. Meek. The writing is somewhat faded, but I guess I can make it out: —

"Received of Captain Caleb Krinkle eleven thousand dollars, to be accounted for on settlement and surrender of mortgage.

April 20th, 18— MOSES MEEK."

"The year is blotted, but we both of us know the date," said Dan.

Mr. Meek's eyes were glaring from their sockets. His face was colorless. A trembling seized him.

"Wh — wh — where did you get that?" he asked, unable to articulate distinctly.

"The Lord sent it to me."

"It's a forgery!"

"I reckon not. The Lord don't give forged receipts. I am familiar with your writing, Mr. Meek."

"Let me see it," said Mr. Meek, reaching out his hand to take it.

"Excuse me, Mr. Meek, but I will just let it stay in my own hands for the present," Dan replied.

A flush came into the white cheeks.

"It is a forgery! A forgery! I never signed it. I'll have you arrested, sir, and sent to the State Prison."

"There are two sides to that, Mr. Meek. How would you like to try a few years in that institution yourself for theft, robbery, swindling, or getting money by false pretence?"

Mr. Meek turned uneasily in his chair and twirled his whiskers.

"You are a villain, sir! You are trying to blackmail me, but you won't. I defy you. I'll have a warrant out for your arrest," Mr. Meek shouted.

"Oh, I guess not. Though, if you think that is the best way to do, go ahead. I shall not object."

Mr. Meek rose from his chair and strode up and down the apartment, running his hands through his hair.

"You haven't told me where you got it," he said, stopping in front of Dan.

"Right straight from the Lord, Mr. Meek, just as straight as it could come."

"What do you expect I am going to do about it?"

"That is just what I want to know."

"If you think you are going to frighten me, you are confoundedly mistaken."

"Oh, no, I had no such idea. But I'll tell you what I am going to do. I am going to compel you to make restitution to Caleb Krinkle to the last cent, principal and interest, or put you into the State Prison. Caleb is not here. He does not know that the Lord has put this into my hands, but I shall act for him," said Dan, with a decision and firmness that astonished and awed Mr. Meek, who quailed before the keen glance of those blue eyes which were looking him through.

Mr. Meek sat down in his chair, rested his elbows on the table, and his chin upon his hands, and bit his nails.

"See here, Dan," he said at length, "I don't want any fuss made about this. You are a good fellow. I always liked you. I don't want to get out a warrant for your arrest. It would about kill your mother, and would destroy your business."

"Oh, never mind my business, nor mother either; get out your warrant. I can stand the game quite as long as you can."

"Well, I know it would be disagreeable all round to have any fuss kicked up about a dirty piece of paper, even if the writing is a forgery; and, if it is any object to you, I'll give you a hundred dollars to call it square, and destroy the thing."

"Give me a hundred dollars, will ye?"

"Yes."

"No, you don't. See here, Mr. Meek, justice is justice and right is right, and you haven't got money enough to change wrong to right. Six years and a half ago Captain Krinkle paid you eleven thousand dollars, and you gave this receipt for it the afternoon before he was drowned. When you saw him the next morning take off his coat and throw it down on the bridge to go and save Winifred, you concluded

that the receipt was in the pocket of the coat; that when the bridge went away and the coat also, it was gone forever. You knew that nobody had seen him pay you the money, that everybody supposed the money was in his pocket, and so you sold yourself to the devil to cheat the estate out of eleven thousand dollars. But the Lord had a hand in the matter, and he is just showing it. Now, I didn't come here to take a bribe, Mr. Meek, but to obtain justice, and I am going to have it."

The words were spoken with emphasis.

"Hush! hush! not quite so loud, Mr. Dishaway. This is between ourselves. I don't care to have the clerks hear us," said Mr. Meek, rising, pulling out a peg in the partition and peeping through the hole to see if the clerks were listening. He was trembling with excitement.

"What do you expect me to do about it?" Mr. Meek asked.

"In the first place, you owe eleven thousand dollars and the interest upon it for six years and a half; in the next place, you got the farm for just about half what it was worth, or about eleven thousand more."

"There is no need for you to go on; I sha'n't pay it," said Mr. Meek, interrupting him.

"We will see about that."

"You can't prove that I ever gave the receipt. You have come to blackmail me. I defy you. I sha'n't pay a cent."

Mr. Meek walked the floor, pulling his whiskers and clenching his fists.

"Then I will let the sheriff have a little talk with you, and the judge and the jury, Mr. Meek. I thought that I would come and see if you were disposed to do the right thing before telling anybody about what the Lord has put into my hands, but I guess I will turn it over to the sheriff."

"Haven't you told anybody?"

"No."

Mr. Meek reflected.

"See here, Dan, don't say any thing about this for a few days. I want to think about it."

"A man can do right at one time as well as another. I will not give you a few days. I will wait, however, till to-morrow morning. If then you will have a deed of the farm made out for Caleb, and are ready to hand over the money, or other property, for the difference between what you paid for the farm and what it was worth, with the interest, all right, but if not, then you must take the consequences."

"I sha'n't do any such thing."

"Very well, you can have till to-morrow morning to think of it," said Dan, as he passed out.

Mr. Meek walked the floor twisting his whiskers. He stayed in his counting-room till late into the night. It was past midnight when he went home, and then he did not go to bed. Mrs. Tansy heard him pacing up and down his chamber. In the morning he had no appetite for breakfast, took but a mouthful of toast, pushed the steak away from him, and sipped a little coffee. He was very pale.

"I hope you are not sick, Mr. Meek," said the housekeeper.

"No," he said, as he went out moodily to his store.

Dan was waiting for him. He had been thinking the matter over during the night. Justice had been wielding her flaming sword in his sight, and he was determined that it should fall upon the villain whom he had driven into a corner, who had been ostentatiously giving to the support of the gospel, who had passed for a generous and honest man, while at heart and in act he was a thief.

Dan entered the counting-room and closed the door. Mr. Meek saw by the gleam of Dan's eyes that bribes would not avail.

"I don't want any trouble about this matter," said Mr. Meek.

"Just as you say about that," Dan replied.

"The receipt is a forgery, but I had rather be plundered than have a row."

"All that you have to do is to hand over your plunder, — *your* plunder, Mr. Meek."

Mr. Meek trembled.

"If I turn the farm over to you, and the things in the house in addition, will you call it square and keep quiet till I can settle up my affairs?"

"See here, Mr. Meek, you have had the use of eleven thousand dollars for six years and more. That at ten per cent — "

"The law don't allow but six," said Mr. Meek, breaking in.

"Don't it! But you have been in the habit of taking ten. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Doctors ought to be willing to take their own medicine. Mr. Meek, I reckon that what you stole outright amounts to about twenty-two thousand."

"It wa'n't stealing," Mr. Meek replied, turning paler than ever. The word was not a pleasant one to his ears.

"I reckon that the judge and jury will call it stealing; but if you are ready to make restitution, I'll tell you what I will do: If you will turn over the farm and all there is in the house, and twenty thousand in cash, I will let you have that little bit of paper I have in my pocket."

"I sha'n't do it," said Mr. Meek, slapping his hand upon the table.

"Good-morning!" said Dan, bowing, opening the door, passing out, and walking down the street.

"Dan! Dan! Mr. Meek wants to see you."

One of Mr. Meek's clerks was calling him, and Dan went back. Mr. Meek was sitting in his chair, but his hands trembled and his lips quivered and he was very pale.

"Dan, if I do the fair thing by Caleb, you won't be hard on me, will you?" he said in a faltering voice.

"Of course not. I have nothing against you, but you have got to face the music, so far as Caleb is concerned."

"I want to get away from this accursed place, and if I do what you want me to, you won't say any thing about it till I can close up and get away, will you?"

Dan reflected a moment.

"No, I'll keep quiet. If you want to close out your business, I will give you time. I only want what is right, and that I will have."

"You won't say a word to anybody till I am gone?"

"No."

"You will give me your hand on that?"

"Here it is," said Dan, reaching out his hand. Mr. Meek clasped it. He knew he could trust the simple-hearted, honest, but resolute fellow; he knew, also, that there was no evading him. Like a hound upon the trail of a fox, Dan would follow him till he made restitution.

The deed was made out, signed and acknowledged in the presence of Mr. Sharp, the head salesman, who was also a justice. But Mr. Sharp and the other witness only knew that it was a legal paper of some sort. Bonds and stocks were put into Dan's hands in trust for Caleb Krinkle.

"I hope, Dan, that you are satisfied," said Mr. Meek.

"You make a little mistake, Mr. Meek. I am nothing. It is Justice, not Dan Dishaway, that is getting satisfaction. By the way, before I go, there is just one other thing: I have some letters here; they have been in the water, but I reckon you can make them out, seeing that you are familiar with the handwriting."

"Who wrote them?" Mr. Meek asked eagerly, and wondering what they might be.

"They were written by Mr. Meek to Miss Vanzant. I have no use for them. I will give them to you. If Winifred were alive, it would be in your power to make some recompense for the wrong you have done."

Dan laid the water-stained package on the table. Mr. Meek gazed upon it a moment and bowed his head in confusion. Dan left the room, but through the day the merchant sat in his counting-room with his hands over his face, or walked the floor. Never before had the clerks seen such paleness in his cheeks. He had complained of a palpitating heart, had consulted Dr. Mayweed, who had said, "You must not get excited, sir, for there is something not quite right about the ventricles."

There was reason now for his being pale. The river had given up its secret, and by and by all Millbrook would know he was a thief, and it would be well for him to close up his business with all possible despatch.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A SMOULDERING FIRE BURSTS INTO FLAME.

IT was commonly reported in Millbrook that Mr. Meek was thinking of leaving the place: that he had already disposed of the Krinkle farm, including the furniture in the house, to a gentleman in Boston, and that Mr. Sharp, the head salesman, was going to purchase the store. Mr. Krinkle admitted that he intended to retire from business. His health was failing, and he needed rest.

The people noticed that Mr. Meek was paler than usual, and that he had lost, in some degree, the vigor and vivacity of other days. They did not wonder at his intention. Why should he make a slave of himself, when his health was failing, and the white hairs were coming so thick and fast, — especially when he was already wealthy, with more money than he knew what to do with, with no wife or child or kin to inherit his property?

It was evident that Moses' robbery of the mail had been a deep mortification, and now Job Titicut had come home with the news of his sad and untimely end. With no wife, child, home, nor scarcely a friend, there could be little pleasure to Mr. Meek in staying in Millbrook, where everybody knew how he had driven Linda and Winifred from home, and the rest of the sorrowful tragedy. There

could be no pleasure to Mr. Meek in meeting his neighbors, especially those whom he had swindled, in connection with the Catawampus concern. He would be altogether more comfortable among strangers than there in Millbrook, where everybody knew how mean he was. It would be a good thing for the town when Mr. Meek was out of it, the people thought.

Mr. Meek was not unconscious of the estimate placed upon him by his neighbors. He knew that they would say when he was gone, "Good riddance, but bad rubbish." Since the failure of the Catawampus Oil Company, Mr. Meek had not cared to meet his fellow-citizens face to face. He had spent most of his time in his counting-room, with the spiders to keep him company. The gray hairs were coming thick and fast in his whiskers. Try as he might to cover them up with dye, Time got the better of him with his bleaching powders. Mr. Meek knew, though his fellow-citizens did not know, that there was a secret connected with the bleaching process which Time was carrying on, — a secret known only to himself and to Dan Dishaway, and that Dan, in the kindness of his heart, was waiting till Mr. Meek could close up his business and leave town before he let the cat out of the bag. It was the fear that the cat would get out before he could leave that brought paleness to Mr. Meek's countenance, — that kept him pacing his chamber floor at night, and set his heart in a flutter now and then.

But they were joyful days to Dan. He had taken up arms for Justice and Right, and had won a victory, and the time was coming when the world would know it. He was only waiting for Caleb Krinkle to return from the West, and then there would be a surprise. The thought of what was coming made Dan very happy as he rode over the hills upon his cart.

Dan was riding along the hill-road. The night had set in suddenly, for the clouds that had been hanging about the hills during the day settled down into the valley. The night was so dark that he could not see the road, and he allowed his horse to take his own course.

"Steady there! steady," he said, now and then, and the horse, comprehending the situation, drew the creaking cart, with its freight of tin and rags, safely over the hills and through the hollows.

But Dan was not aware of the fact that there was no bridge across a small brook that gurgled down from the hills; nor that the highway surveyor had torn it up to replace it by a new one; nor that the workmen had forgotten to put a fence across the highway to turn travellers into the field to another crossing. Not knowing this, Dan suddenly found himself pitched heels over head into the brook, and his cart going over upon its side, with a general mixing up of things. There was but little water in the brook, and it was but the work of a minute to cut his horse loose from the wreck, and get him out of the stream. The night was so dark that Dan could not well discern the extent of the damage to his cart. He could see that it was bottom side up; that the pans, pails, wash-tubs, mops and brooms were scattered in every direction.

"That's a pretty mess," he said to himself, as he peered into the darkness. "That's what I call neatly done. I couldn't have mixed things up any more if I'd tried. Coffee-pots, skimmers, ladles, dish-pans, buckets, pails, tea-kettles, and the whole kit and boodle lying around promiscuous. Dan, you did well that time, but what are you going to do about it, old fellow? That's what I want to know."

He said it aloud, as if he and Dan were two distinct persons.

"Yes; what are you going to do about it? that's the question," he repeated, and added, "Please throw a little light on that subject, if you can, old fellow. Your lantern is smashed flatter than a pan-cake; besides, it is under water. And suppose you had a lantern, how are you going to get your old cart right side up again, without somebody to help you? I'll bet two to one that you don't get it done to-night, out on this lonely road, with nobody living within a mile of the place, except Widow Nubbin. The first thing for you to do, old fellow, is jest to go up to Widow Nubbin's house and get a light, and the widow's hired man, Joe Wilkins. Perhaps you and Joe, together, can get the old cart right side up again."

So saying, Dan tied his horse to a tree, and went up the road. It was not far to the house, and he could see a light shining from the kitchen windows. He found his way to the door, and knocked, and Mrs. Nubbin, in the prime of life, plump and fair, and neatly dressed, opened the door.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Nubbin!" said Dan.

"Why, Dan, is it you? How do you do?"

"Pretty well, myself, I thank you; but I've got the nicest mess down here that you ever saw," Dan replied.

"The nicest mess!" Mrs. Nubbin exclaimed, not understanding him.

"Yes. I reckon the highway surveyor forgot to put a fence across the road down here by the brook, and the consequence is that there is a lot of old tin down there. Coffee-pots, pails and wash-boilers jammed flatter than a flapjack, with my old cart on the top of 'em, its wheels in the air; and I want to get a lantern, and I would like to have Joe go down and give me a lift."

"Why, Dan! And wasn't you hurt?"

"Scarcely a bit. Got one shin barked a little, that's all."

"I'm so glad!" said Mrs. Nubbin, the look of anxiety disappearing from her face. "But how unfortunate! Joe has gone to a corn-husking, this evening, and won't be home till midnight. Just wait a minute, till I get on my bonnet and shawl, and I will go with you."

Before Dan could make a reply, she was away after the lantern. In a few moments she was ready, and together they went back to the scene of the disaster. They reached the spot, and Widow Nubbin held the lantern while Dan took a look at the wreck.

"Dear me! What a mess!" said Mrs. Nubbin.

"Things are kinder promiscuous, that's a fact. If anybody wants to buy a lot of stuff cheap, I'm their customer," Dan replied, surveying the scene.

"Don't you think you'd better let them be till morning? Things won't be any worse then. Come, just lead your horse down to the stable, and I'll have some supper ready for you in a few minutes."

"Thank you, Mrs. Nubbin; I guess I'll do it," Dan replied, convinced that it would be the best thing he could do, under the circumstances.

Dan went to the barn with the horse while Widow Nubbin hastened into the house to get him some supper. She was alone for the evening, the hired man having gone to a corn-husking, and it would be pleasant to have Dan there for company.

Deborah was so spry that the white cloth was on the table, the plates laid, the bread, doughnuts, apple-pie, sauce, butter and honey, and a plate of cold tongue all arranged, and the tea steeping on the stove, by the time Dan was ready.

Although Widow Nubbin had been to tea, she would take a second cup on this occasion. When she and Dan

sat down to the table, herself on one side and he opposite, where Mr. Nubbin had formerly sat, — when she looked into Dan's honest face a vision of the past came to her. For a moment she could not help recalling the hard lot she had had in life with Mr. Nubbin. But if she had experienced trials, they were over. Now she was abundantly able to live easily and comfortably.

Although she was rich, it was lonely living in such an out-of-the-way place, with only a hired man to keep her company. How pleasant it was to have Dan there. He was no longer a great gawkey, but very good-looking. Through all the years that had passed, his words, spoken on that sad night when he asked her to be his wife, had been ringing in her ears, "I have worshipped the ground you walk on, and always shall." It was a pleasure to pass him a cup of tea, to wait upon him, to manifest her respect for him.

"Help yourself, please, Mr. Dishaway, and make yourself at home," said Mrs. Nubbin, who at the moment thought that it would be rather more respectful to call him Mr. Dishaway, seeing that he was her guest.

"Thank you, Mrs. Nubbin. Sha'n't I help you to something?" said Dan.

"I have had supper, but nevertheless, to keep you company, I'll take a piece of bread and a little butter, if you please," Mrs. Nubbin replied.

Dan passed the bread and helped her to butter. He was a little abashed at sitting there alone with the woman he had once loved as his life. Usually he had no difficulty in carrying on conversation, but just then he couldn't think of any thing to say. Neither could Mrs. Nubbin, and there was an awkward silence.

"Won't you help yourself to tongue, Mr. Dishaway?" said Mrs. Nubbin.

"Thank you. Perhaps it would be as well for both of us to eat a little," said Dan.

"I dare say it would," Mrs. Nubbin replied, blushing and laughing. The light from the kerosene lamp fell upon her face, and Dan saw that it was as fresh and fair as ever.

"Why don't you grow old, Mrs. Nubbin?" he asked.

"Don't I?"

"Not the least bit; you haven't got a gray hair in your head. You are as fresh as a daisy."

"You flatter me, Mr. Dishaway, I'm sure."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Nubbin; I mean it. And you are as spry as a kitten."

Dan ate heartily of the bountiful repast.

"Take another doughnut, please," said Mrs. Nubbin, passing the doughnuts a second time.

"No, I thank you, Mrs. Nubbin. I have eaten so much already that my appetite says, 'Do not.'"

"O Mr. Dishaway, you are a funny man!" Mrs. Nubbin replied, laughing at the pun. Then you must take another piece of pie," she added.

"I should like to please you, Mrs. Nubbin, and perhaps if I were to stand up awhile, I might do it, but I've eaten so much already that I dare say I shall dream of my grandmarm."

Mrs. Nubbin laughed again, but as Dan could eat no more, they rose from the table, and while Mrs. Nubbin was clearing it, he sat by the fire, warming his feet. It was a cheerful fire that was blazing on the hearth. Mrs. Nubbin used a stove in winter, but during the summer and fall she moved it into the back room, and when the evenings were chilly, kindled a fire in the fire-place. She threw a pine knot upon the fire, and soon the room was aglow with

light. When she had put the dishes away, she took her knitting-work and sat down in the corner opposite Dan.

"I should think, Mr. Dishaway, that you would get tired of going the same rounds year after year."

"Well, it is an old story, but if I were to stop peddling, who would buy the old rags? How would the girls ever get their fixings out of tin? Who would give rattles to the babies?"

"I didn't think of that. Sure enough, who would? but then, I should think you would want to settle down."

"Well, I should kinder like to, but I've been going so long that I'm about like the Dutchman who had a cork leg with a lot of machinery inside of it, and when he got to going he couldn't stop."

Mrs. Nubbin laughed again.

"It does me good to hear you laugh, Deb — Mrs. Nubbin, I mean. Excuse me," said Dan, blushing.

"Call me Deborah, Mr. Dishaway. That is my name, and it will seem like old times."

"And you just call me Dan. It don't seem natural to be called Mr. Dishaway," Dan replied.

"Thank you, Dan," said Deborah, blushing again.

"I declare, if I haven't dropped a stitch," she added, leaning forward and examining her knitting.

"That's the way with all of us in life, we are always dropping stitches. We are always doing something which we wish afterwards we hadn't, and when we've done the best we can, the work isn't near as good as we wish it was," said Dan.

"That is so," Deborah replied, with a sigh. She was thinking of the great stitch that she dropped when she rejected the offer of such a kind-hearted man.

Not till he heard the sigh did it occur to Dan that Deb-

orah was thinking of the past, and then his heart smote him for saying any thing that would trouble her.

Deborah was still bending forward, looking at her work. He saw a tear drop upon her hand. The sight of it brought to remembrance all the past. When Deborah married Mr. Nubbin, Dan had said to himself, "I have no right to love her any longer. She is dead to me forever." So, while ever treating her with the utmost respect, he had schooled himself to think of her only as a friend. But the old love was not wholly extinguished. As a smouldering brand is fanned by the breeze, so the sight of Deborah, so plump and fair, and in the full vigor of womanhood, rekindled his love.

Why should he not utter the words that were on his tongue. He must. Better to have the flame extinguished at once than to feed it till it became a consuming fire.

"Deborah!"

She raised her eyes to his.

"May I come and sit by your side?"

She did not reply, but drew her hand quickly across her eyes to dash away the tears. Dan moved his chair, sat down by her side, and took her hand.

"O Deborah! I thought it was dead, but it isn't — it has come back — the old love. Will you be my wife?"

It was the same question he had asked in the years gone by. Many times since then she had wished that she had said Yes on that eventful night.

"I am not worthy to be your wife, Dan, but I will do what I can to make you happy," was the faint reply that came to him.

"God bless you, Deborah." And of all the glad moments of Dan's life that was the most blissful.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A GREAT QUESTION.

IN the wilds of Michigan and Wisconsin, threading his way through the pathless forest, looking after the pine lands purchased by Mr. Wayland, Caleb passed the summer. He had but one companion, Peter Bottineau, his guide — a Chippewa half-breed — who, in the cloudiest day and in the densest forest, knew which way to go. They had a simple outfit, a small shelter tent, which they could put up at night on a couple of sticks. A stew-pan, coffee-pot, tin cups, plates, and a bag of flour, baking-powder, sugar and salt pork, — all of which they could carry on their shoulders. They trusted to their guns for meat, and they were never in want of venison or fowl. If they wished for a supper of trout, they had but to cast their hooks into the streams. When the flour, sugar and pork ran low, Bottineau left Caleb in the forest, and replenished the commissariat at the nearest settlement.

His work in the pineries completed, Caleb passed over to the prairies of Minnesota, and there, as the distances were long and horses could be used to advantage, he purchased one for himself, another for Bottineau, and a third to transport their outfit.

To Caleb there were indescribable charms in the soli-

tude of the prairie. The curlews piped around him, crying, "Quit it! Quit it! Quit it!" as if warning him away from their haunts and homes. The prairie fowl ran through the waving grass, or flew away on whirring wings. The crows called to him from the upper air, while around, on every hand, arose the ceaseless hum of insects and the chirping of innumerable crickets.

When night came, they set up their tent by some winding stream, or by the shore of a lake, kindled a fire, baked their cakes, set the coffee-pot on the coals, hung a joint of venison upon a stick, laid a few slices of pork in the fry-kettle, and sat down to a luxurious repast.

In the long summer evenings, while the twilight lingered, Bottineau narrated his adventures upon the plains while hunting the buffalo or fighting the Sioux — the implacable enemies of the Chippewas. As the twilight faded the aurora appeared in the north, sending its flickering lances of light from the horizon to the zenith. Like hostile armies moving to battle, so the electric hosts charged and countercharged across the sky. When the armies of light had finished their battle and had passed away, then the stars came out from the depths of space and shone with unwonted splendor.

At other times the sun went down through a purple haze, throwing its departing rays upon a bank of leaden clouds. Then through the deepening gloom Caleb caught glimpses of celestial architecture, — castles, towers, massive walls, gorgeous palaces, temples, cathedrals, and all the wondrous and glorious transformations of cloud-land. Then faint and quivering flashes of light illumined those cities of the upper air. The flashes grew in brightness and became sheets of flame. Then there was the rattling of thunder far away. Higher, and in stately procession, mount

the clouds, changing from leaden hue to inky blackness. Brighter the sheets of flame, nearer and heavier the thunder. A fresh breeze ripples along the grass. Then comes a blinding flash, and on the instant a deafening crash. The rain comes down in drops, and then in drifting spray. The wind increases to a gale. Broad flashes of light quiver along the horizon, or sweep up to the zenith. Bolts fall earthward, spreading out into threads and fibres of light. All the pinnacles and turrets of the celestial city are tipped with golden balls. For an instant the whole concave of heaven becomes a sheet of livid flame. At midnight it is day. The thunder crashes and reverberates from cloud to cloud. The landscape — the sea of verdure, the oaks and elms, the wave-washed shore of the lake, and objects far away, are bathed in golden light, then lost in impenetrable darkness. How grand the scene!

While Caleb was thus spending the summer in the West Bertha was by the seaside at Nahant. Though there, her thoughts were far away; she was ever thinking of a brave-hearted man upon the distant prairies. She was conscious of a quickening of the pulse as she read the letters that came from Caleb, giving an account of his experiences. She received many letters from other friends, but there were none so attractive as his. When she had read them in the house, she went out upon the rocks where the surf was dashing at her feet, and the waves were creeping into the resounding caverns, and read them again. Then, in reverie, her thoughts went back to that day when Caleb sat there by her side, and spoke those earnest words which had turned the current of her life. She was indebted to him for all the true happiness she had ever experienced.

While sitting there, one day, and re-reading his letters, she saw two ships sail out from the harbor, side by side,

the thought came — "If I could but sail with him, how blissful then would be the voyage of life-!" The ships had the same sails spread — gib, topsail and main-sail; the same breeze was wafting them; they were moving in even motion as if bound for the same port, and the sailors on one ship were talking to their friends upon the other. Very pleasant was the sound of their voices. The thought came, — "Oh, if I could but sail with him!" Then she began to count the weeks Caleb had been gone, and the weeks that would pass before he would return. So, through the days, he who had saved her life, and who had turned it in a new direction, lived in all her thoughts.

The summer was over, and September with its calm, still days had come. Caleb was looking forward to the time when his work would be completed. As he gazed upon the enchanting scenes around him, whether in the early morning, when the dewy air was fragrant with the perfume of the late-blooming flowers, or at evening, when the sky was suffused with golden light, he wished that Bertha were there to behold it. The lands over which he was wandering belonged to her, and would she not be pleased to see her fair possessions as they were, blooming with late-flowering petunias, lilies, hare-bells, and the wild phlox? Would she not gaze with rapture upon the scene, and as the fresh breeze fanned her cheek, feel an exhilaration of spirit and a quickening of life? And what if she were there by his side to behold the scene? What then?

He stood face to face with a great question. What were to be his relations to Bertha in the future?

He recalled their last interview — the light in her eyes as she accepted the rose he had given her. Why that brightening? Why had she spoken those parting words —

"Come as soon as you can." In the letters he had received from her during the summer, were confiding words, such as a sister might write to a brother, or to a very dear friend. Caleb remembered these: —

"I miss you very much. At the dinner-table I think of you as having occupied the seat at my right hand. When I play and sing, I think of you as sitting by my side a silent listener; and yet you encourage me far more by your appreciative silence than some of my acquaintances possibly can by clapping their hands. I have a thousand questions to ask about what you have seen. I will not put them upon paper, but will wait till you come."

Whence had come this confidence? Was it Bertha's gratitude alone that had inspired it? She was his friend. Was it among the possibilities that she would ever be more than a friend? Would she come to him in her matchless beauty, with all her possessions and all the wealth of her affection, to fill his life with happiness? Could he accept such a love as hers, — so full and so rich? Ought he to do it? What would not General Pompon and Rev. Mr. Cassock and a host of admirers give to be the recipient of such attentions as she had bestowed upon him? But was it Bertha's love they were seeking? Was it not her money rather? If she were a portionless girl, earning her daily bread, would they be so devoted to her? If despicable in them to offset their selfishness against her purity, goodness, beauty, wealth of character and worldly estate, would it not be mean in him to take advantage of her gratitude, confidence and love, and so come into possession of her property? Would it not be a lowering of his manhood? If Bertha were struggling alone in the world, a poor girl, he could go to her in all his strength and say, "Let me help you," for she would command his admira-

tion and love. It would not be the old love, however. The tree never again would put forth such blossoms as it had borne in the past, but it would be a true and abiding affection. If Bertha were struggling with adversity, and he could have such a going-out of his heart toward her, why not now? If he himself were rich, and Bertha poor, would he not lay his love and his riches at her feet and ask her to accept them? If he could bestow every thing upon her, with their positions in life reversed, why not now accept her love?

But there was another side to the question. Might not the time come when she would regret her choice of him? Would not Society turn up its fastidious nose at him, and refuse to open its doors to an adventurer? That he, himself, could bear; but Society would slam its doors in Bertha's face. Would not Society say, "She has chosen to step down from our circle, and we will let her stay there"? If so, would not life be bitter to Bertha? Miserable indeed would he be, if, for that or any other reason, she were to weep unavailing tears. With her former friends passing her by on the other side, as the priest and Levite passed by the man who fell among thieves, would she be happy in his love? Would not her friends look upon him as a thief? And where would be the Good Samaritan to bind up her bleeding wounds, — worst wound of all, a bleeding heart?

And then, there was a fair face that haunted him. He saw it in his dreams. Sometimes, as he sat by his glimmering camp-fire, it seemed as if Linda was by his side, looking up into his face, as on that night when he had said, "In God's good time I will come to you." And at times, in the solitude, he seemed to hear her saying, "True love can wait till then." With these memories still hovering

around him, could he be a recipient of an affection so deep and tender as Bertha's? Yes; for who could not be happy in receiving a love so full and rich and pure as hers? And yet, were he to accept the priceless gift, would not her happiness be placed in jeopardy. Knowing what he did of society, he could not doubt it. Then far better for both that they should be as they were — friends — rather than that they should occupy a more endearing relation.

Caleb had been writing to Bertha, — the letter was half completed, — stating that he had been detained longer than he expected, but that in a few days he would be on his return. How should he meet her? Should he stand coldly aloof? If he could not accept her love, embarrassments might arise. It was by her growing shyness, by the dropping of her eyes, and by that perception which admits of no analysis, that he had discovered Bertha's love for him. He could not say to her, "I have seen the dawning of your affection for me, but I cannot accept it;" nor must she know that he had discovered it, for then she would hide her face in shame. Besides, her friendship was priceless, and he must retain it.

The crickets were chirping in the dried grass of the prairie, but there was no other sound to break the stillness of the solitude, for Bottineau, his guide, was asleep. Caleb threw fresh wood upon the fire, and by its light added this to what he had already written: —

"You asked me in your last letter if I had not been lonesome while so far away from civilization. I can answer that I am never alone. I have had Bottineau for company, to begin with, who has entertained me by his stories. Then, I have myself for company; — I wish the company were better, but you know the poem: —

'My mind to me a kingdom is.'

"True, it is a little kingdom, but there is this consolation: there is room for its enlargement! Then I have all the past to think of, and all the future to dwell upon, and all nature to make suggestions.

"And then there is one fair face ever present, — a face which I shall never see again this side the Better Land; but I see it as I have seen it in the past. Wherever I go, Linda is by my side. At times I feel, as it were, her hand clasping mine, her head reclining on my shoulder. I know that these fancies are but memories, and that it is by the law of association that I thus think of her. Oh, it would have been so pleasurable to have enjoyed her companionship and love through life! but it was not so to be, and I must go by myself alone."

He would have written more, but the fire was low and the light dim, and he had no wood to rekindle it. He folded the letter and put it in his pocket. He might perhaps add more in the morning. He would mail it the next afternoon at the settlement whither he was bound, and it would reach Bertha a few days in advance of his own arrival. Her perceptions were so keen that she would at once discover that he could never be to her aught but a friend, and she had such nobility of character that her respect for him would be increased rather than diminished, and so she would be more than ever his friend.

It was a cool evening, and kicking the half-burned brands of his fire together, he stood over them a few moments before spreading his blanket for the night. The sky was cloudless and the stars shone with unwonted brilliancy. Far away in the west a lurid line of light illumined the horizon. Some hunter or traveller must have fired the prairie, and the horizon in that direction was all aglow. He gazed awhile, but his thoughts were far away. He could think only of Bertha, and of the possible disappointment that he had prepared for her. Ought he to send what he had written? Yes, it was better

that it should be so. Then, before lieing down to sleep, lifting his thoughts from earth to Heaven, he could ask with an overflowing heart that the choicest blessings might be meted out to her.

CHAPTER XLVIII

A GREAT HOPE FADES AWAY.

THE Wayland Cottage at Nahant was charmingly situated. It was far enough from the shore to be beyond the reach of the spray that flew high in the air when the north-east storms were raging, and yet so near that on the calm summer days, and through the peaceful nights, Bertha could hear the low murmuring of the sea upon the rocks in its hours of calm. A lawn reached from the cottage to the edge of the cliff, and there in the quiet summer afternoons Bertha and her visitors engaged in the game of croquet, or, when weary with that, they sat in the rustic chairs upon the piazza or swung in the hammocks, then strolled upon the rocks, and gathered the tinted sea-mosses thrown up by the waves.

The hospitality of Beacon Street had been transferred to the seaside, and in consequence there were summer visitors at the cottage. Aunt Janet had feared that Bertha, in the strangeness of her ways, would lead a hermit's life, and was agreeably surprised when she saw her making the Wayland cottage in some sort a Mecca to ladies and gentlemen of culture and refinement. She was glad to see that Bertha was no longer discontented with life, and that the gloom which at one time had clouded her brow had wholly disappeared. True, she still was possessed of the idea that she must care

for the poor creatures on Negro Hill, in North Street and in Poverty Court, but never before had Aunt Janet seen her so cheerful. She was rejoiced to know that the sea air was giving such freshness to Bertha's cheeks.

It was not alone this living by the sea that made Bertha so light-hearted; there was a rose in her bureau drawer, — a faded flower, but fragrant with memories, and it would be fragrant forever, because she had received it from the noble-hearted man who not only had saved her life but who had filled it with happiness. She never was weary of reading the letters that came to her from the far West, written by Caleb Krinkle, narrating his wanderings in the wilderness and upon the prairies. They were not quite such letters as a lover might write to his betrothed, but there was a pleasure in reading them such as no other letters afforded. And to read them there by the seaside, on the very spot where he had spoken such earnest words, made them all the more enjoyable. Was is it not a pleasure to read such a sentence as this? —

"I would that you were here by my side to behold the beauty of the prairie, where the sun rises from a sea of verdure and sets in an ocean of flowers; where my horse tramples the roses beneath his feet, and the air is fragrant with perfume and resonant with the songs of birds."

Would she not like to be there! But more pleasurable than to behold the sea of verdure, or breathe the fragrance of the flowers, or listen to the carolling of the birds, would it be to see him, to gaze upon his manly brow and to hear his soul-cheering words.

She had given Caleb her gratitude because it was his due; she had respected him because he never flattered her, had never praised her beauty, nor the sweetness of her voice

while singing, nor her accomplishments as a pianist. Her affection had gone out to him because when she was floating away she knew not whither, — when, with no meaning to her life nor comfort in her living, he had taken her by the hand, as it were, and led her to a restful place and given her happiness and peace.

Pleasant as was the society of friends, it was more pleasurable to Bertha to go out by herself and sit upon the rocks during the quiet afternoons when the sun was silvering the waves, and in the calm evenings when the moon was rising from the deep, and think of him whose life was so intertwined with her own. Her love for him had sprung up she knew not how. At times she said to herself, "I have no right thus to think of him. Never by word or sign has he made known his regard for me. I must not think of him as necessary for my future happiness."

Blooms there a fairer flower than the what-may-be of love? Nourished though it be in secret, how fragrant! how beautiful! Yet, while saying this, Bertha could not pluck it up, and the plant was striking its roots deeper day by day.

September came. The summer visitors to the seaside were returning to their city homes. Bertha and Aunt Janet and a few friends still lingered to enjoy the Indian-summer days. On a quiet afternoon, while Aunt Janet and Professor Linguist were having a game of chess in the parlor, Bertha went out by herself upon the rocks. There was a fleet of fishermen's boats in the bay. It was flood tide, and, though the day was calm, the waves were breaking musically upon the rocks. A stately ship was spreading its sails for a voyage across the sea. As Bertha gazed upon the scene she recalled the day when Caleb sat there by her side and they together saw a ship sail away and vanish in the distance. Then, she was going as it

had gone, but Caleb had brought her back. So he lived in all her thoughts. The summer was over; his work must be nearly completed. In a few more days — a week at the farthest — he would be sitting by her side once more. The waves took up the thoughts and repeated it: "A few more days, a few more days." So light-hearted was she at the thought that she hummed a song; there were no words — only what the waves were saying, "A few more days, a few more days." So light-hearted was she that the sand-peeps and the gulls came circling through the air as if to listen to her song; and the ship that was sailing away carried her gladness, as it were, across the sea.

While sitting there, Peter came toward her across the lawn.

"I was looking for ye, Miss Bertha," he said.

"Any thing particular?" Bertha asked.

"Oh, no; only de mail has come, and as there are several letters for you, I thought perhaps you would like to read 'em out here upon the rocks."

"You are very thoughtful, Peter."

Peter gave her the package and went back to the house.

Bertha turned over the letters; she could tell by the addresses and by the postmarks who had sent them. There was one from Mr. Asset, which she knew was solely on business. There was another from a friend at Saratoga; another from a friend at Newport; others from acquaintances at the White Mountains, Mount Desert, and on the Saguenay. The last one she came to was from Minnesota. She laid the others aside and opened that. She was conscious of a quickening of the pulse as she broke the envelope. Her eager eyes took in the opening words: —

"This is my last day in camp. To-morrow morning Bottineau will turn back with the outfit, while I myself will go on to a settlement

where the Land-Office is located, and where I shall be detained a short time. You may expect me after a few more days. I will tell you what I have done when I arrive."

More musical the waves, more joyful the piping of the peeps.

"The last day on the prairie! The last in camp!" Bertha repeated to herself, and then thought over the days that it would take for Caleb to travel from Minnesota to Massachusetts.

It seemed as if that was all Caleb had intended to say at the outset, but there was more upon the sheet. Bertha turns the leaf. Her eye runs down the page. She catches her breath, clasps her hand to her heart, and then the sea-mist gathers in her eyes, and the salt spray falls upon her cheek.

The tide is going out; the ship is vanishing in the distance and a great hope is fading away, fading away. Bertha covers her face with her hands, as if she could not bear to see it disappear.

Faster ebbs the tide. The crescent beach is bare, the purple haze is deepening in the east, and into it sails the ship. And the hope, — oh! how can she see it go!

The shadows deepen; the air is growing chill, and night is settling on the deep. She looks again; the ship is gone. It by and by may come sailing into port again, but the hope is gone — *forever!*

CHAPTER XLIX.

IN GOD'S GOOD TIME.

CALEB and Bottineau were eating their last meal upon the prairies. Bottineau had been astir before light; had left Caleb sleeping soundly and gone with his gun to the shore of a pond near at hand, and had returned with a wild goose and a duck, which he had dressed. The fowls were roasting, the coffee bubbling in the pot, and the cakes baking on the tin, when Caleb awoke.

It was a chilly morning, and the ground was white with frost.

"*Bon jour, Monsieur Krinkle*," said Bottineau, who, though he could speak English very well, usually gave his morning salutation in French. "A little white about the gills," he added, noticing Caleb's frosty beard.

"And a little stiff in the joints," said Caleb, rising.

"We shall have a hot day, notwithstanding the night is so frosty," said Bottineau, noticing the sun, which was just appearing, red and fiery, through the smoke and haze of the morning.

The fire which Caleb had noticed far away the night before was still burning, and the smoke had settled in a dense cloud along the horizon.

"It must be a grand sight when the wind is high, and the

grass tall and rank and dry, to see thousands of acres of flame," said Caleb.

"Very grand; especially when you are on the windward side, but not always an attractive sight when it is sweeping toward you with the speed of a race-horse. But come, Monsieur, breakfast is ready," said Bottineau.

While Caleb was washing his face and hands at the shore of the pond, near at hand, Bottineau spread the table. He found a flat rock on which he laid the goose and duck, for he had no other platter. He had killed a deer the day before, and had broiled a couple of slices of venison.

"I thought, seeing it was to be our last meal, I would have a variety," he said, as Caleb surveyed the array of meats. It was a sumptuous repast. The venison was tender, the goose and duck rich and juicy, and the cakes nicely done. While eating, Bottineau narrated his experience on the prairie — his narrow escape from being burned to death.

"Usually there is no trouble in protecting yourself from a fire. If the grass is thin, there is no danger whatever. It is only when the grass is tall and dry and the wind blowing a gale that there is danger. Then you must fight fire with fire," he said.

"How do you do it?"

"By setting another fire in advance. If you have matches you can start another one, and as soon as it has burned a place as large as your blanket, you can step upon it and be safe. In a few moments it will be raging as fiercely as the other, and in a short time you will have an acre of burned ground all to yourself."

"Suppose you haven't any matches?"

"Then you must flash your pistol, or place the muzzle of your gun in the grass, and fire a charge."

"But suppose you have no gun?"

"Then you must make tracks for a pond."

"What if there is no pond near at hand?"

"Then, if you can't outrun the fire, you must ride through it."

"Suppose that I am on foot, then what?"

Bottineau shook his head.

"I have seen, Monsieur Krinkle, a prairie fire so fierce that if a man were overtaken by it on foot, he might as well say his prayers for the last time, yet there might be just a possibility of his going through it. The only thing for him to do would be to select a spot where the grass was thinnest, cover his face and hands, if possible, with his blanket, or, if he had no blanket, with his coat, and then, when the fire was just ready to lick him up, hold his breath and run with all his might. A dozen rods will carry him through the thickest of it, and then, if his clothes are on fire, he must tear them off in a twinkling and trample them beneath his feet. However, it is not often that a man would be put to such a strait," said Bottineau.

The breakfast finished, the tent and the outfit were packed up, and Bottineau, touching his hat to Caleb and bidding him "*Bon jour*," mounted his horse, took the pack-horse in lead, and trotted slowly away toward the east, while Caleb, mounting his own horse, rode to the west, to reach the settlement where the Land Office was located. When his business was completed there, he would turn his steps eastward, settle with Bottineau on the way, and then take the cars for Boston.

He could only think of Bertha, and of the decision he had made. The more he thought upon it the deeper the conviction that he had acted wisely. Now their friendship would be abiding. Society never would pass her coldly by. There would be no bitterness for her in life, nor would a tear ever tremble on her eyelid on his account.

So, through the forenoon, lost in meditation, he rode on, the hoofs of his horse beating the seed from the dried grasses. At times he rode through swales where the rushes were higher than his shoulders as he sat upon his horse, and at times ascended knolls and rounded hillocks from whence he could obtain commanding views of the wide expanse. Although it was the middle of September, the heat of the sun was like midsummer. The thick smoke from the distant fire settling down, partly obscured it, but it hung in mid-heaven like a brazen ball.

Caleb saw that he was gradually approaching the fire. He noticed, also, that the game was unusually abundant. Through the thickening haze he saw a stately elk, with branching horns, moving rapidly. Then a deer made its appearance. Foxes seemed to be abundant, and wolves were keeping them company. More deer — a herd trotting past, seemingly not noticing him. Had he wanted venison he could have obtained a bountiful supply.

Jack-rabbits came skipping through the grass, laying their long ears on their shoulders and panting in the heat. And now a flock of prairie fowl went by on whirring wings. They all but flew against him, and Caleb noticed that animals and fowl alike were moving east. He had been riding in a swale, but, ascending a knoll, he gazed upon a magnificent panorama.

A fresh breeze had sprung up and the smoke had been lifted. The fire was still three or four miles away, but the animals, scenting danger, had begun their migrations. He could see a cluster of houses in the distance toward the north-west. Around each building there were plowed lands, so that the settlement was not endangered by the fire. For several weeks he had not seen even a solitary cabin, and it gave him a thrill of pleasure to behold this

evidence of civilization. He had enjoyed his summer work, and had found pleasure in the wilderness, but the thought came, that, after all, civilization was better than solitude, and that a man to be at his best, and to do his best, must mingle with his fellows. Now that he was through with his work, it would be a gain to come in contact with men, to sit in a chair, to lay aside his corduroy pantaloons, and have his hair cut.

Gazing at the fire, he could see that it was rapidly advancing from the southwest, like a victorious army across a battle-field. The wind was blowing a gale from the south-west. Handfuls of flame were torn from the surging sheet by the wind and hurled far away. It was like the constant throwing out of a line of videttes in advance of an army. In the ravines and hollows where the grass was rankest the flames leaped high in the air and great columns of smoke rolled upward, obscuring the sun and filling the sky with gloom. Upon the knolls, where the grass was thinner, it swept quickly past, while behind the advancing line there was blackness and desolation. Rabbits and foxes fled before it, the ground squirrels sought shelter in their holes, and the snakes kept them company. The birds flew in frightened flocks. The sparks and cinders were borne far away by the wind, constantly kindling new centres of flames. The roaring of the fire, if not like the roll of distant thunder was of a nature to inspire man and beast alike with terror. Caleb noticed that his horse was sniffing the air and manifesting his sense of danger by uneasy movements.

For weeks Caleb had been upon the pathless prairie, but below him, in a little hollow, winding around the knoll, was a road leading from the cluster of houses, four or five miles distant, to a solitary cabin, which stood by itself in

a plowed field. The farmer owning the cabin had taken the precaution to plow the ground as a guard against just such a fire as was now sweeping toward his home. The road ran through the hollow and then was lost to sight around another hillock, but came into view again as it approached the house.

While gazing upon the rising clouds of smoke, and upon the flames leaping into the air and devouring the rank vegetables, Caleb saw a farmer's wagon, drawn by a span of horses, appear, from behind a knoll. The horses were moving at a rapid pace, and the driver was carrying an umbrella, and he could not say whether it was held by a man or woman.

There were farming implements in the vehicle, which rattled upon the boards as the wagon struck upon an uneven place. It was evident that the horses, like his own, were scenting the danger, and were quickening their pace to a run. The driver was guiding them with a tightened rein, but at every step they were nearing the line of fire which was being borne by the wind diagonally toward the road.

The occupant of the wagon evidently was making all possible haste to pass a curve in the road before the fire reached it, but the horses became unmanageable, and turned from the path. The wagon began to bound over the uneven ground, tossing a rake, hoe, shovel, and bags and horse-blankets into the air.

The driver dropped the umbrella, and the horses, as if still more frightened, broke into a run. Caleb saw that it was not a man, but a woman, and that she was powerless to hold the thoroughly-frightened animals. They ran upon a hillside. Suddenly the body of the wagon went over with a crash, while the horses with the forward wheels dashed away and disappeared beyond a knoll.

Caleb beheld the spectacle with horror. He plunged his spurs into the flanks of his own steed. It might have been a third of a mile from where he had been gazing upon the panorama to the scene of the accident. A minute and he was there. He leaped from his horse — and looked into the face of — Linda!

His heart stood still! The dead alive! There are times when moments are ages, and such a moment had come to him. Her eyes were closed, her cheeks pale.

"Linda!"

No answer, no movement of her lip, no lifting of the eyelids.

"Linda!"

No response; no sign of consciousness. He placed his finger upon her wrist, but could detect no beating of the pulse. Had life gone out in one great wave?

"Linda! Linda!"

He shouts her name; presses her hand; lifts her head from the ground. Whether she is living or dead he cannot say. Oh, the agony of the moment! If dead, he can die with her there; if living, he can die to save her! He will save her, whether living or dead, from the devouring flames. He can hear the roaring of the advancing fire. He must kindle a back fire. He feels in his pocket for a match, and then remembers that he used his last one in the morning. He must lift her, then, upon his horse and bear her away. He stoops to take her in his arms, but, though a giant in strength at the moment, it is not easy to raise the inanimate form with the paleness of death upon her face. In his efforts to accomplish it he drops his rein, and in an instant his horse is gone. God help him now!

What shall he do? He can take her in his arms and carry her — but whither? Alas! there is no place of

refuge. Strong as he is, he is not strong enough, nor fleet enough of foot, to escape the flames.

The blinding smoke, driven in advance by the wind, is already beating down upon him. No human aid is nigh nor angel from heaven, to rescue her. If the wind were to change, there would be deliverance, but the flames are rolling nearer. He looks around; sees the body of the wagon, the blankets and farming implements. A thought comes to him. A hundred thoughts crowd upon the brain. He seizes the shovel, and plunges it into the earth, tears up the sod, throws the earth upon the grass around him. With nerves of iron he sends the bright blade deep into the mellow soil. Oh, for ten minutes!—for five! He seems to make no progress, but one glance at that dear face turned with closed eyes toward him fills him, as it were, with superhuman energy.

Nearer—the hot and stifling breath. Through the dense smoke he can see the red sheet of fire which shortly will sweep with the speed of a whirlwind up the steep hillside. Every nerve and muscle, and all the strength that God has given him, is brought into use. Oh, for five minutes more!—for three!—for one! He can delay no longer. He dashes the shovel upon the ground, takes Linda in his arms,—she is but a feather's weight,—lays her in the shallow trench. Is it to be her grave? He picks up the body of the wagon as if it were but a toy, and places it on the windward side for a shield; spreads the woollen blankets over her; crouches by her side; draws his coat over his face.

Hissing, crackling, leaping, winding in fiery coils, it comes! A billow of flame sweeps over him. He gasps for breath and crouches closer to the earth. A moment, and yet an age, and then he feels the fresher air, throws

aside his coat, stamps upon the flames around the trench to extinguish them, raises the covering from Linda's face. Unconscious still, but unharmed. God be praised! Saved as by fire!

Around was a blackened waste, with little white clouds of smoke arising from the still burning bunches of grass.

He heard the sound of approaching wheels, and saw a man coming over the blackened ground in a wagon, lashing his horse to a run.

"Ish der fraulein dead?"

"No."

"Gott in Himmel! I vas afraid dat de fraulein vas dead. O Mein Gott! Mein Gott! vot a vonder!" said the German, leaping from his wagon, stooping and kissing Linda's hand. Together they lifted her into the wagon, and Caleb held her in his arms while the German drove toward his house.

"How came she with you?" Caleb asked.

"Oh, de fraulein vas on de dampfboot mit me and mein frow and de kinder. Ah! Mein Gott! And der vas de sthorm and de sinking of de dampfboot and de drowning of mein kinder — ein — zwei — drei — kinder gone down into de vasser. But me and mein frow, de fraulein and Vinifred, float to de shore. Den I say to the fraulein and Vinifred, 'Come and be my kinder.' O mein Gott! vat a times it vas!"

The German's wife and a young girl came out to meet them. The kind-hearted woman was wringing her hands. They had caught a glimpse, through the smoke, of what had happened, and the man had hastened to the scene. Caleb knew that the girl with golden hair before him must be Winifred, from the description he had had of her, but he was a stranger to them all.

They carried Linda, still unconscious, to her room, bathed her pale cheeks, moistened her lip, applied restoratives, and saw with joy the signs of returning life.

Bewildered and wondering, Linda gazed upon Caleb.

He took her by the hand.

"Don't you know me, Linda? I have not been false to you, and now, in God's good time, have come to you."

A cry of joy and her arms are about him.

Leave them there, and let love tell in secret its sad and tragic tale.

Sitting with clasped hands, each hear the other's story. No doubt can now disturb their trust and confidence, and such love as theirs will stand life's sternest test.

Caleb learned that the German and his family were fellow-passengers with Linda on the steamboat. His children had perished, but himself and wife, Linda and Winifred, were upon a portion of the wreck that floated out into the lake, and finally to the shore. Having nowhere to go except to a hiding-place where Mr. Meek could never find her, and wishing to do what she could to comfort the broken-hearted parents, she had gone with them to their Minnesota home. In their estimation there was no person on earth to be compared to the fraulein Fair. In their sorrow she gave them comfort, in their weakness she gave them strength.

It was wholly a German settlement. Some of the people could speak English, others could not, but Fraulein Fair soon learned to talk with them. And the fraulein was always so wise, and so ready to help, that the simple-hearted folks, when they were in doubt about any thing, settled it by saying, "We'll ask the fraulein."

Linda laid down her work in Millbrook, to take it up again in Minnesota, not making vests, but teaching the

children during the week in school, and on Sunday the whole congregation, from the Bible. To them, she herself was the gospel. When she had read a chapter, told them its meaning, prayed with them and answered their questions — when the lesson was ended, they came and kissed the fraulein's hands, to let her know how much they loved her. As the painters of old represented the virgin surrounded by an atmosphere of light and glory, so they thought there must be an invisible shekinah enfolding the Fraulein Fair.

And Winifred — there was no other child so beautiful and loving. How could she be otherwise than loving, with the fraulein to lead her?

By the seashore Bertha had read not only what Caleb had written by the fading embers of his prairie-fire, but what he had added after rescuing Linda — an account of all that had happened. While reading it the ship had sailed away, and when it had vanished in the distance, a great hope which she had cherished, almost unconsciously, was borne away. The ship might return again, but the hope never. Not till it had vanished did Bertha herself know how great or how beautiful it had been. But there was joy in her sorrow. Linda was alive, and Caleb would be blessed with her love forever!

CHAPTER L.

AT HOME.

THERE were three passengers in the stage, as it whirled up to the "Flying Eagle," — a young gentleman, a young lady, and a girl.

The jolly landlord was standing upon the steps of the piazza, ready to open the door of the coach. He was getting gray, and his eyes were not so keen as in former years, but he was still the same genial man in spirit, ready to give good cheer to his customers and everybody else.

"Dinner is ready, ladies and gentlemen," he said, letting down the step of the coach. He used the plural — "gentlemen" — from force of habit, having repeated the words every day for a quarter of a century.

"A beautiful morning," he added, also from force of habit. He was always polite to travellers, and wished to make their short stay at his house so pleasant, that everybody would think of the "Flying Eagle" as one of the best hotels in the country.

Caleb stepped upon the piazza, and assisted Linda and Winifred to alight. The landlord, meanwhile, was opening his eyes.

"What! Linda Fair! Little Golden Locks! Caleb

Krinkle!" he said to himself. He looked again, rubbed his eyes, opening them very wide.

"Am I in my senses, or am I going crazy? It can't be them; Linda and Golden Locks are dead — they've been dead a year or more," he said again to himself.

"How do you do, landlord?" said Caleb, addressing him and reaching out his hand.

"Thunder and lightning! What's the meaning of all this? Who are you? Are you Caleb Krinkle?"

"I am nobody else," said Caleb.

"Is that Linda Fair?"

"It is," Linda replied, smiling.

"And is that little Golden Locks?"

"That is little Golden Locks," said Linda.

"Ain't you drownded?"

"No."

"Ain't Golden Locks drownded?"

"No."

"I beg your pardon, but you are dead. You were both of you drownded more than a year ago, and your funeral sermon has been preached, for I heard it, and a mighty good one it was. Are you sure that you are alive?"

"Quite sure," said Linda, pleased at the landlord's perplexity.

"Well, I don't want to dispute you — it wouldn't be polite; but if you ain't drownded, then the newspapers lied like the Old Scratch, and all Millbrook has been Tom-fooled. I declare, this beats every thing! Wasn't you shipwrecked?"

"Yes."

"And didn't you go to the bottom?"

"No."

"And this is you, and nobody else?"

"Nobody else."

"And that is little Golden Locks?"

"That is Winifred."

The landlord was an enthusiastic man, and whenever he was greatly pleased, gave vent to his enthusiasm by extravagant demonstration. The fire had been kindling within. The first glimpse of Linda's face and Winifred's golden hair had startled him. He had thought them dead, but there they were alive, or else his eyes deceived him. While holding Linda's hand, and watching the smiles upon her face, and listening to the words that fell from her lips, the fire had been flaming higher, and now it burst forth. He let go Linda's hand, seized Winifred in his arms, and kissed her, then swung his broad-brimmed, slouched hat over his head, and shouted, "Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!"

Mrs. Gabberly lived near the hotel, and was always on the look-out when the stage arrived, to see who was in it. She looked out of her kitchen window, and saw that something unusual was going on. There was the landlord, talking with a gentlemanly young man, and then with a young lady.

"Who can they be? Seems as if I had seen them somewhere. The landlord knows them. I'll make an errand over to Mr. Meek's store, and find out who they are," she said to herself.

She took her straw hat from its nail, clapped it on her head, and tied the strings while walking up the street. She was approaching the piazza of the hotel, but stopped suddenly when she heard the landlord hurrahing and saw him swinging his hat. She lifted her hands in amazement.

"Linda! Winifred! Goodness gracious! Is it possible?" She rushed forward and took a good look at Linda.

"Linda Fair, are you alive, or are you dead?"

"I am alive."

"Where have you been? Where did you come from? What have you been doing? Oh, my! if this don't beat all!"

She then threw her arms around Linda, and hugged and kissed her.

"And Winifred, too! Ain't she dead?"

"No, nor I haven't been dead," said the child.

"Let me get hold of you, you precious creeter," said Mrs. Gabberly, grasping Winifred. "Well, I declare! Who ever heard the like of this! Oh, my! Won't people wonder! I must let 'em know about it. It is too good to keep all to myself!" exclaimed Mrs. Gabberly.

If there was any thing that gave Mrs. Gabberly special delight, it was the dissemination of startling news, and now, without stopping to learn any thing more, she hastened away to make known the wonderful event. She passed from house to house, not stopping to ring bells, but, opening doors without ceremony, informing her neighbors of what had happened.

"Oh, such news! Oh, my! who would have thought it! Linda Fair ain't dead, nor Winifred either. They are at the hotel — just come in the stage — alive and well as ever. They are on the steps of the piazza this blessed minute!"

Before the astonished neighbors could make inquiry, Mrs. Gabberly was on her way to the next house. So, in a very short time, all Millbrook — all that portion in the immediate vicinity of the hotel,— knew that there had been, as it were, a resurrection of the dead.

The women put on their bonnets, the men laid aside their work, the little girls and boys shouted the wonderful

news to their fellows, and all hastened to the hotel to shake hands with Linda, Winifred and Caleb.

They listened with clasped hands and bated breath to Linda's story of the shipwreck, and how Caleb had rescued her from a terrible death.

It was a triumphal procession that escorted Linda to her home. Everybody had missed her. All had mourned for her. On Sunday, the meeting house had seemed lonely with Linda gone; they had missed her sunny face and her pleasant voice, and now to see her, to know that she was not dead, but living, and there among them once more, they could not restrain their joy. They must be near her, must go with her to the cottage, and see her in it as of old.

Mrs. Dishaway and Dan were still living in the cottage. Dan had found time to care for the flowers, and Mrs. Dishaway had kept every thing neat and trim about the house. The summer flowers were withered, but the maples were gorgeous in their glory. Dan was sitting on the bench beneath the porch, tuning his violin, when the stage drove up to the "Flying Eagle." Having tuned his instrument, he began playing "The Last Rose of Summer." Though playing it, he was thinking of Widow Nubbin — not of her as being the last rose, but the best rose in the world for him. The sorrow of other days was forgotten in his present joy, and he was looking forward joyfully to the day when he could call Deborah his own. He was playing the melody because it was sweet and beautiful, and in consonance with his mood for the moment. Was not Deborah the personification of all that the melody expressed? Dan saw a crowd of people ascending the hill. He stopped in the middle of a shake, not knowing what to make of the commotion.

"What's broke loose now, I wonder?" he said to himself, as he beheld the advancing assembly.

"What sort of a caravan is that, anyhow?" he added, as the assembly approached the gate leading to the cottage.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet, almost threw his violin upon the bench, and dashed down the path.

"Jerusalem! Jingo! Jewhilkins!" he shouted, opening the gate and throwing his arms around Linda; then seizing Caleb by the hand and clasping Winifred to his heart. He hugged all three separately and together; then he danced around them as the King of Israel in his joy danced before the Ark of God.

"Jerusalem! Jingo! Jewhilkins!" he exclaimed again.

Mrs. Dishaway, hearing a commotion, came to the door, and there was another scene of embracing.

So to her old home Linda was welcomed.

Mr. Meek was in his counting-room, looking over his papers, when the stage arrived. He saw a gentleman, a lady and child stepping from it. Linda! Winifred! Caleb! His heart was beating wildly. A faintness came over him. The room grew dark. He staggered to a lounge and threw himself upon it to keep from falling. Through the afternoon he lay there trying to still the wild beating of his heart and the wilder tumult in his brain.

CHAPTER LI.

A BUZZING IN MILLBROOK.

THANKSGIVING was at hand, and as Caleb and Linda, and Job and Mary were to be married in the meeting-house at the close of the service, the occasion promised to be of unusual interest. The parties had so many friends who wanted to be present when they were married, and as there was no private house that could hold them all, they had consented to the arrangement. The occasion promised to be all the more interesting because Bertha Wayland would be there. An abiding friendship had sprung up between Mary and Bertha at Hilltown, and in those enthusiastic days the girls had entered into a solemn covenant to attend each other's wedding. Bertha, therefore, was coming to keep her promise.

All Millbrook intended to be present to witness the ceremony. Although Caleb had been gone so long, yet he had a host of friends. The old men wanted to be there to shake hands with him, for they respected his devotion to principle. Men in the prime of life, who knew how hard it was to get on in the world, liked his pluck in fighting with adversity and conquering it. The young ladies admired him because he was brave and good. The married women, who knew the worth of a strong man's love, wanted to take him by the hand

and thank him for his devotion to Linda. A love that could not be bought with money and beauty, to say nothing of Bertha's sterling character, would stand the wear and tear of life. All the boys and girls in Millbrook wanted to be at the wedding to see how a marriage was performed; and besides, they had heard their fathers and mothers say so much about what Caleb had done, that they looked upon him as a hero. Then Linda was so good, and there had been so much of romance in her life, that everybody wanted to be present when she was married. More than this, Job had worked his way in life so steadily and successfully, that it would be a pleasure to see him married to one of the best girls in town. When it was known that Bertha Wayland, the beautiful lady whom Caleb could have had if he had only said the word, was to be present, everybody in town determined to be there. So it came about that there was much discussion in the households in determining who should have the privilege of going to meeting, and who should be elected to stay at home and look after the puddings and chickens baking in the ovens.

There was one citizen, however, who had no thought of attending the wedding, — Mr. Meek. He was busy in his counting-room settling up his affairs. He had resolved to dispose of every acre of land and every piece of property, so that when he had once left Millbrook he never would be obliged to visit the place again. He was pale, silent, thoughtful and ill at ease; for he knew that some of his fellow-citizens had no respect for him and would be glad when he was gone. Possibly the dislike was mutual, for some of those who held certificates of stock in the Catawampus Oil Company informed him to his face that he was a swindler.

There was one citizen, however, for whom Mr. Meek had great respect, Dan Dishaway. Mr. Meek knew that Dan was

a true man, for, through all the weeks that had passed, not a whisper had escaped Dan's lips in regard to the great secret known only to themselves.

The clerks in the store noticed that Mr. Meek was not only pale, but that he took little notice of what was going on around him. He was lost in thought, and grew thin and haggard. When Mr. Sharp and Mr. Scribe went into the counting-room, one evening, to witness a deed which he wished to execute, and another document, they noticed, as he wrote his name, that his nerves were unstrung.

"I am afraid that you are working too hard," said Mr. Sharp.

"I have been somewhat under the weather for the last few days, have worked a little too hard, perhaps; but I am most through with it, and shall soon get things squared up. Then I shall have all the time that I want to rest and travel," Mr. Meek replied.

"I hope so," said Mr. Sharp, as he retired.

Mr. Meek turned to the pile of papers before him. The shop-boy put up the shutters when the sexton rang the nine o'clock bell, but Mr. Meek was still examining papers. The boy locked the store and went home, leaving him, as he had many times before, for Mr. Meek had a duplicate key and could let himself out when he was through with his work.

In the morning the boy came and took down the shutters, and the rising sun, streaming into the dingy room, fell upon the pale, cold brow of Mr. Meek, who was still sitting there, his hand grasping deeds and mortgages, but motionless forever. The spiders were spinning their webs in the corners above him to catch the flies, but he who had spun so many webs, caught so many struggling victims and sucked their blood, was sitting with bloodless cheeks and listless hands — his spinning ended. The neighbors came and gazed upon

the scene with speechless lips. Doctor Mayweed felt of his wrist, looked into the glazed eyes, and gave his verdict, — "Disease of the heart."

Men are awe-stricken in the presence of sudden death by the visitation of God. Whether the dead were loved or hated, when we see them lying at our feet we walk softly. So it was on that morning in Millbrook. Men who had suffered at the hands of Mr. Meek, who had seen their hard earnings transferred to his pocket through the Catawampus Swindle, forgot their hatred, feeling that the time is coming when all wrongs will be righted.

"How sudden! Did he leave a will?"

The question followed the exclamation. Moses was dead, and Mr. Meek had been divorced from his wife. Had he any heirs? If not, what would be done with the property? They were questions which all Millbrook was turning over.

Mr. Sharp, the head clerk, who had purchased the store, found a package in the safe, tied around with red tape, sealed with six seals, and stamped with Mr. Meek's monogram, M. M. It was thus directed: —

FOR DAN DISHAWAY.

To be opened only by him.

The writing was underscored. Mr. Sharp was curious to know what the package contained, but, being an honorable man, went up to the cottage and delivered it to Dan just as he found it.

Dan looked at the envelope, first on the face, — reading the writing. Then he examined the back, the red tape and the six seals.

"Mr. Meek did it up tight, didn't he?" said Dan.

"Very," Mr. Sharp replied.

"He didn't mean to have it come open; that's plain," said Dan, looking at it again and turning it over.

"But ain't you going to open it?" Mr. Sharp asked, a little nettled at Dan's slowness.

"Well, — perhaps so, by and by; but ye see, Mr. Sharp, that it has come so unexpected, that I want time to think of it first," said Dan, putting the package in his pocket and buttoning his coat.

Mr. Sharp was provoked at Dan's coolness. More than that, Dan had quietly rebuked his curiosity. Mr. Sharp returned to the store no wiser than before, in regard to the contents of the package. It was very soon understood, however, that Dan knew something about Mr. Meek's affairs, for he had been over to Hilltown to confer with the Judge of Probate, and besides, he was looking after things in the Krinkle Homestead. — The people so thought of it; never as Mr. Meek's house.

Mrs. Gabberly's curiosity was aroused. She must know about Mr. Meek's affairs. She resolved that if Dan knew any thing about matters, she would worm it out of him. She was making her Thanksgiving pies, when, looking out of the window, she saw Dan upon the street. She left her rolling-pin and stepped to the door.

"Good-morning, Dan! how do you do this morning?"

"Quite well, I thank you; how do you do?"

"Well, I'm kinder middling, but what's the news this morning?"

"Nothing in particular, that I know of," Dan replied.

"Oh! by the way, Dan, they say that you know all about Mr. Meek's affairs."

"Do they?"

"Yes, and that you have a great, big bundle of papers, all tied round with red tape, with six great daubs of sealing-wax on it, and all of 'em stamped on with the letters M. M."

"How large did they say the bundle was?"

"Oh, they didn't exactly say how big it was, but that Mr. Sharp found it in Mr. Meek's safe, and that it was directed to you, and that no other living critter under the sun was to open it. Now just tell me all about it; come, that's a good fellow," said Mrs. Gabberly, coaxingly.

"Did they say there were six daubs of sealing-wax on it?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure it wa'n't five?"

"No. Mr. Sharp said there were six."

"Oh, Mr. Sharp said so, did he? Well, he's a sharp man, and he ought to know," said Dan, with great gravity, and added, "Are you sure that he said it was stamped with the letters M. M.?"

"Yes, that's jest what he said."

"Didn't you misunderstand him. Wasn't it P. M.? Mr. Meek was post-master, you know. Then P. M. stands for afternoon, and for particular metre," said Dan.

"You know it wasn't P. M., you aggravating fellow. Come now, just tell me what there was inside of the package?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"Of course I do."

"Won't you mention it to anybody?"

"Not a syllable."

"Will ye keep it to yourself, sure?"

"I won't let anybody know."

"Sartin, now?"

"Not a lisp to a living soul."

Dan came a little nearer to the front-yard fence, looked around to see that no one was near, lowered his voice, and said, confidentially, —

"Well, Mrs. Gabberly, seeing it's you, I'll tell you how we'll get at the bottom of Mr. Meek's affairs. You jest tell

me all you know, and I'll tell you all I don't know, and then we shall know all about the matter."

"You hateful critter!" said Mrs. Gabberly, raising her hand to slap his face, as he turned away.

He bowed and smiled and nodded to her familiarly, as he passed up the street.

Mrs. Gabberly, though provoked with him, could not be angry at the kind-hearted fellow. She went into the house as much in the dark as ever. Nor could she understand why Widow Nubbin should be down to the Krinkle Homestead, dusting the furniture, unless the party in Boston who had purchased it was coming up to keep Thanksgiving, and had employed Widow Nubbin, who knew all about the establishment, to set things to rights.

Thanksgiving came. Never before had there been such an outpouring of people. Seats in the gallery, which on Sunday were usually empty, on this day were packed with expectant people, who were not there to hear Rev. Mr. Orison preach, but to witness a marriage ceremony, which was to be performed at the close of the regular service. They opened their eyes with amazement when they saw the great array of flowers around the pulpit, — wreaths and bouquets of white roses, that filled the house with perfume — the gift of Bertha Wayland. And Miss Wayland, herself, was there.

In the months gone by, when Mrs. Gabberly came home from the seashore and informed everybody that Bertha had supplanted Linda in the affections of Caleb, the people of Millbrook did not think very highly of her, but now, when they saw how beautiful and kind and good she was, they forgot all the disparaging remarks they had made, and wanted to thank her for contributing so much by her gift

and her own presence to make it a joyful occasion. Even if there had been no flowers around the pulpit, she herself would have filled the house, as it were, with beauty.

And old Peter, the white-haired negro, Caleb's faithful friend, was there, — his woolly locks, his shining face and white teeth and cotton gloves making him a conspicuous object in the congregation. Bertha could not deny him the pleasure of being present on the joyful occasion. He had guarded the floral tribute all the way from Boston to Millbrook in the cars and on the stage, and had stood guard over the decorations all the morning in the meeting-house.

Father Canticle had gone to his reward, and Rev. Mr. Orison, a young man fresh from the Theological Seminary, was the minister.

"We sometimes find," said the preacher in his address to the congregation, "when we have marked out a grand scheme of life, that God had a plan entirely different from ours. In our hearts we know that His is the best, yet, like self-willed children, we want our own way. God shows his kindness to us, however, in not always letting us have it. Some of us may have shed bitter tears while burying our dead hopes, but as flowers blooming above a grave draw their life and beauty from the mouldering form beneath, so out of our sorrows sometimes bloom our brightest joys. As the violets lie beneath the snow of winter, but appear in grace and beauty when spring breathes upon them, so shall there be a resurrection and an immortality for all the good we accomplish. A passing team grinds an acorn into the earth, and so some lives are crushed beneath the wheels of the revolving year. We think that nothing can come of our efforts, but God never forgets any thing. The acorn springs up, becomes an oak, that braves the storms

of centuries; and in the same way the good life, with its germ of immortality, lives and grows forever."

Bertha Wayland, sitting there, and hearing these soul-inspiring words, looked far away, not backward to a regretful past, but onward to a hopeful future.

When the minister had finished his address, the organ began a voluntary, and while it was playing, Caleb and Linda and Job and Mary rose from their seats and passed slowly up the aisle. Linda and Mary had not troubled themselves about wedding-dresses. They had said, "Our lives are to be plain, and we will be married in plain dress."

There was a flutter and excitement, and a stretching up of necks. Those who occupied seats in the rear stood up, while those who were low of stature stood upon the crickets in the pews. Slowly, arm in arm, keeping step to the music of the organ, they moved toward the vacant space in front of the pulpit, where the minister was standing.

There was a lady and gentleman following them. The people opened their eyes wide. What! Widow Nubbin! Dan Dishaway! Greater the excitement. Louder the buzzing. Were not their eyes deceiving them? Could it be possible that the gentleman in a new and neatly-fitting frock coat, his hair nicely trimmed and parted, walking so proudly up the aisle, with Widow Nubbin leaning on his arm, was Dan Dishaway?

"Well, I declare!" said Miss Hyssop to a friend.

"If that don't beat all!" her friend replied.

"I never should have mistrusted it," said Mrs. Gabberly to the landlord of the "Flying Eagle," who stood by her side. "Well, Dan has been and gone and done it, sure enough," she added.

"No; he's just going to do it," the landlord replied.

"I should ascertain, sah, dat de whole congregation was about to jine hands on dis fallacious 'casion, sah," said Peter, addressing the landlord.

The parties stood before the minister. The organ ceased and the buzzing died away. The listening assembly heard the words: —

"To love, to honor, to cherish each the one whom you have chosen, till death shall part you."

A few more words and the ceremony was over, but still the parties stood there. The minister took a paper from his pocket.

"It is suitable," he said, "on this joyful day, while our hearts are so full of gladness, to recognize every thing that is good. I am directed by the executor of the last will and testament of Mr. Moses Meek, now deceased, to read the same to the congregation."

A commotion, and then so still the house that everybody could hear the clock counting the seconds.

"Know all men, by this writing, that I, Moses Meek, of sound mind, and in possession of all my faculties, knowing the disappointments of life and that there is nothing certain in this world but death, which I feel may come to me at any moment, do hereby make my last will and testament. Knowing the honesty and integrity of Dan Dishaway, I do hereby appoint him to be sole executor of this instrument.

"I have already conveyed to the said Dan Dishaway, in trust, the sum of twenty thousand dollars to be paid to Caleb Krinkle, to whom it rightfully belongs. I have also conveyed by deed to the said Caleb Krinkle the farm which was formerly his father's."

There was a renewed commotion throughout the congregation.

"I hereby direct my executor to pay to each original subscriber to the Catawampus Oil Company the full amount of his subscription."

Greater the commotion.

"The remainder of my estate, real and personal, wherever found, I give and bequeath to Winifred Vanzant, my own child, whose mother I grievously wronged. I know that the evil which men do lives after them, and so by these acts I would make amends, so far as is in my power, for my wrong-doing. I ask forgiveness of all whom I have wronged, as I do of my God."

What a buzzing! What wonder! What amazement! What exclamations! And all so happy, so joyful, so inexpressibly glad — for Caleb, for Linda, for Job, for Mary, for Winifred, for Widow Nubbin — widow no longer — and for Dan, the generous-hearted.

What hand-shaking! All the share-holders of the Catawampus Company were grasping each other by the hand, and saying, "This is a Thanksgiving worth having." Then the thought came, "If we are so joyful here, how great must be the joy in the world above over a sinner that repents of his wrong doing!"

While the citizens were thus exchanging congratulations, Linda and Caleb, Mary and Job, and Deborah and Dan were receiving the salutations of their friends.

Bertha and Bell walked up the aisle arm in arm, to salute the brides. Very loving was the exchange of kisses between Linda and Bertha, and very tender that benediction which she pronounced upon Linda and Caleb as she held them, the one by her right hand and the other with her left.

"God bless you both!"

Nor did it cost her a pang to say it. There was no bitterness nor sorrow. She could rejoice in their happiness from an overflowing heart. Because they were happy her own happiness was complete.

"Come and see us," said Caleb to the people. "Come to my old home to-night, on this the happiest day of my life. Come all of you — old and young — and let us be joyful together."

CHAPTER LII.

THE OLD HOME.

THE people, as they rode home from meeting to eat their Thanksgiving dinners, and while gathered in family circles around the bountifully-spread tables, talked of the wonderful come-about of events. Now they could see what sort of a spectre it was that had been following Mr. Meek through life. He had deserted a confiding girl, filled her life with shame; had married a woman old enough to be his mother, for money which he never obtained; had renewed his intimacy with the woman he had first loved, and Winifred — if not in law — by his will and by equity, was therefore his rightful heir. Now they could understand what Dan had been up to during the last few days at the Krinkle mansion, and why Widow Nubbin had been down there setting things to rights. It was all Dan's planning. He would have Caleb and Linda, after their marriage, go at once to the old home, where the fires would be lighted and the sun streaming into the rooms. More than that, they learned that Deborah had a Thanksgiving dinner all prepared, — a turkey roasting and a plum-pudding baking in the oven, and pies, tarts, nuts and raisins in the pantry, — not only for the new master and mistress, but for Bertha Wayland, Winifred, herself, and

Dan and Mother Dishaway. Together, Dan and Deborah had planned to make it the happiest Thanksgiving party in Millbrook or anywhere else. And old Peter was there to wait upon them.

The people said to themselves and to each other, "Who but Dan could have carried around for weeks a secret so momentous as that which he had discovered? Who besides Dan could have confronted Mr. Meek and compelled him to make restitution to Caleb? Who would have thought that there was so much energy, reserved force, and determination in the kind-hearted fellow?

Evening came, and as the full moon rose above the eastern horizon, the people assembled at the Krinkle farmhouse, old and young together. The house was aglow with lights, — in parlor, sitting-room, chamber and kitchen. That nothing might be wanting to make the evening enjoyable, the farmers' wives brought cold roast-chicken, pies, cakes, doughnuts, tarts, jellies and jam, and spread a bountiful repast in the dining-room. They took possession of the kitchen, and made coffee and tea.

Old Peter had brought the flowers, the bouquets and garlands from the meeting-house, and Bertha, Bell and Daisy re-arranged them in the parlor and sitting-room. The roses, heliotropes and calla-lilies filled the house with their fragrance. To add to the pleasure of the evening, the young men composing the Millbrook band brought their instruments, stationed themselves in the hall, and played their choicest tunes.

The young folks gathered in the sitting-room, and had their romp and games of "Copenhagen" and "Blind Man's Buff," while the old folks gathered in the parlor, or made themselves at home in the dining-room and kitchen,

talking over the events of the day. When supper was ready, they ate till they could eat no more, and told stories, and laughed till their sides ached.

If it was a pleasure to Caleb to take his friends by the hand in his old home and to receive their congratulations, it was equally a pleasure to them to see him there, with Linda on his arm, — his true-hearted wife.

Great was their respect for Bertha, who, in her beauty and queenly dignity, stood among them, seemingly the happiest person present. They knew that she could rejoice with all her heart in the happiness of Linda and Caleb.

And Bell was there, with the old-time smiles running over her face, happy because Linda and Caleb were happy, and because everybody was having a good time.

"It will be your turn now, Bell. We shall see you flying off the handle next," said Mrs. Gabberly to Bell.

"Me? Oh, no! I'm going to be an old maid. Single blessedness isn't the worst thing that can happen to a girl. The world couldn't get along without old maids, you know," Bell replied, laughing.

Later in the evening, not only Mrs. Gabberly, but several other folks, saw that Bell and Mr. Felloe, the young widower, were talking together in a corner, and that Bell seemed to be greatly interested in what he was saying, and they came to the conclusion that in due time there would be another wedding, and that Bell would be mistress of Mr. Felloe's home.

When the company had eaten supper, and were gathered once more in the parlor, Mr. Makepeace, addressing Caleb, said: —

"In behalf of the company, Mr. Krinkle, allow me to say to you, on this joyful evening, that we welcome you

with all our heart to your old home, and that it gives us pleasure to be here to take you by the hand on this, the happiest day of your life. We know what trials you have encountered, what troubles have beset your path, and how you have overcome them. Your devotion to principle and to duty, and to Linda — no longer a maiden, but a wife — will ever be an inspiration to us all. I need not say more, save to express the hope that your future may ever be as blissful as the present hour."

There was a clapping of hands throughout the apartment, and the band in the hall took up the applause and filled the mansion with music.

"My friends," said Caleb, when the music ceased, "I cannot express my thanks to you for your kindness. It is a pleasure to see you, to look into your faces, to feel the warm grasp of your hands; but I have not done any thing to command such friendship as you have manifested. If I have made any headway against adverse circumstances, it is because a true-hearted girl led me on ever to a higher ideal."

Again there was a clapping of hands, which brought blushes to Linda's face.

"And not only that," Caleb continued, "but I am also indebted to one of your number for any success that may have attended me hitherto."

Caleb took a wallet from his pocket, opened it and unfolded a paper, yellowed by time and worn almost to tatters.

"On that morning in the years gone by," he continued, "when I went out from Millbrook penniless, without a purpose, and alone, not knowing whither I was going, and all my future a blank, I received this from the hand of a very dear friend. Allow me to read the writing: —

"'*Strict integrity.*
Firm purpose.
Constant endeavor.
Patient waiting.
Trust in God.'

"As the sailor in mid-ocean looks up to the sun to know whither he is sailing, so in my hours of loneliness, when wind and tide were against me, and I seemed to be drifting farther and farther from port, I have turned to this paper, yellowed by time and worn with constant carrying, and have taken new courage."

Caleb turned to Dan Dishaway, and grasped his hand.

"To you, my dear friend, who rescued me from drowning in childhood, who gave me this paper, and cheered me with kind words on that morning when I left Millbrook, I am indebted for all I am and all I hope to be. *God bless you, Dan!*"

Long and loud the applause. And there stood Dan, his face covered with blushes, not knowing what to do with himself. He could only bow and smile and hang his head, while the room rang again with applause.

"There is one other friend whom I want to thank," said Caleb, when the applause had died away; "and here he is. Old Peter, for he it was who sat by my side day and night, while life and death were hanging in even balance. Let me shake hands with you, Peter," said Caleb, extending his hand.

Peter, wearing a dress-suit, with white gloves, proud of the respect shown him, came forward with dignity to shake hands with Mr. Krinkle.

"Tank you, Mr. Krinkle, for de honor and de 'spect you have conferred upon me, sah, on dis joyful 'casion.

I should ascertain, sah, dat if it hadn't been for old Peter and Doctor Tragacanth, dere never would have been no such 'casion as dis year, sah; but old Peter, with de help of de Good Lord and Doctor Tragacanth, pulled you through, sah, right away from de jaws of def, sah. It gives old Peter de greatest pleasure to be present on dis casion. May de Good Lord bless you, Massa Krinkle, and you too, Missus Krinkle." Peter made a low bow, amid the applause of the company.

Then there were hand-shakings and parting salutations, affectionate and tender, as the guests one by one took their departure. So passed the pleasantest Thanksgiving ever known in Millbrook.

And now, when visitors to the mountains in mid-summer pass through the town, they not unfrequently see Dan and Deborah sitting upon the piazza of the Krinkle homestead, Dan playing his violin, Deborah knitting, and a little boy toddling from one to the other. Dan no longer drives his cart over the hills, but is looking after Caleb Krinkle's affairs. When the summer vacation comes, Caleb, himself and Linda, and Winifred, in the bloom of girlhood, and Miss Bertha Wayland, are also seen sitting there, or else playing croquet beneath the old elm in the dooryard. When the swallows fly to their southern homes, they too return to their work in the city. Caleb is Bertha's adviser, friend and brother, and between Linda and Bertha there is a friendship which only death can sever.

In mid-winter, when the winds sweep through the lanes and alleys of the city, rattling doors and windows, when the hoar frost creeps into the house of the poor and leaves its frozen rime upon the window-pane, when the snow lies deep upon the pavements, the policemen going their rounds see

a lady in water-proof, mittens and thick boots passing through the alleys and into out-of-the-way places, calling upon the poor, the sick, the suffering; and as they watch the receding form of Bertha Wayland, say to themselves, "There goes one of God's angels, and wherever she goes there is less of Hell and more of Heaven."

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